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A STUDY OF ACCULTURATION IN CHINESE-MONGOLIAN *ER'RENTAI* FOLK OPERA

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A STUDY OF ACCULTURATION IN CHINESE-MONGOLIAN *ER'RENTAI* FOLK OPERA

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Fine Arts
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By

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Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

A STUDY OF ACCULTURATION IN CHINESE-MONGOLIAN *ER'RENTAI* FOLK OPERA

Er'rentai, or Mongolian dance and song duets, is a genre of folk opera in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. *Er'rentai* performances can be categorized into two styles—the "western-style" and the "eastern-style." The aim of this thesis is to explore the acculturation in Chinese-Mongolian *er'rentai* genre in the following ways. First, I address the historical background of the western-style *er'rentai*. Then, I draw on fieldwork with Huo Banzhu, a famous *er'rentai* musician, to introduce contemporary state of *er'rentai*'s development. Finally, I employ musical analysis to demonstrate the borrowings of Mongolian music and culture in the formation and transmission of Chinese-Mongolian *er'rentai*.

KEYWORDS: *Er'rentai*, Acculturation process, Chinese-Mongolian Folk Opera, Huo Banzhu, Inner Mongolia

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NOTES ON ROMANIZATION AND TRANSLATION

All Chinese words have been romanized according to the pinyin system. I follow most rules of the pinyin system except adding tone marks on all Chinese words. All Mongolian words have been romanized according to the traditional Mongolian alphabet system. Its notable feature is vertical script.

Chinese names are written according to the Chinese conventional usage, with the surnames first followed by the given names. I have also italicized all Chinese and Mongolian words throughout the text, with the exception of place names and person names. For my own name, I have chosen to use Western practice in terms of name order.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Focusing on the musical practices of *er'rentai* performer Huo Banzhu, this thesis concentrates on the singing, dancing, speaking, acting, and other performance aspects of the tradition of *er'rentai* in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China. [1] As a significant genre in this border region, *er'rentai* is an effective channel for musical dialogue between Han Chinese and Mongolians, providing more possibilities for developing new musical works and performance styles. The aim of this thesis is to highlight a cross-cultural perspective on *er'rentai* and demonstrate its iconic status in the Inner Mongolian region. By presenting some possible Mongolian origins and analyzing its Mongolian borrowings, I propose that western-style *er'rentai* originated from Mongolian musical culture and developed under the influence of both Chinese and Mongolian traditions.[2]

Er'rentai, or Mongolian dance and song duets, is a genre of folk opera in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. Its history can be traced back to the eighteenth century, at the end of Qing dynasty. Literally, "er" refers to "two performers," whereas "tai" means the stage. Therefore, it refers to a performance in which one male performer and one female performer sing and dance together on the stage (Figure 1.1). Most traditional *er'rentai* pieces are derived from traditional songs, in which rural life and love

[1] Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region locates in the north of the People's Republic of China. Han Chinese and Mongolian are two major ethnic groups in the region. The official languages are Mandarin and Mongolian.

[2] The term, western-style *er'rentai*, was brought by Wang Shiyi in two academic conferences in 1987. Wang defined the birthplace and the musical style of western-style *er'rentai*. Since then, several researchers began to study the origin of western-style *er'rentai* and reached an agreement that western-style *er'rentai* influenced by Mongolian music and culture. Detailed explanations of western-style *er'rentai*'s origin will be introduced in latter sections of Chapter II.

stories are the primary topics. The instrumental accompaniment includes three instrumental sets. The primary set of instruments are *khuuchir* (a four-string Mongolian fiddle) and *limbe* (Mongolian transverse flute). Depending on different musical settings or repertoire, a variety of traditional Chinese instruments or Mongolian instruments can also be incorporated in the ensemble. The second set typically include percussion instruments, such as *drums* and *wooden clappers*. The third set could include plucked string instruments, such as *yangqin* (hammered dulcimer), the *pipa* (a four-stringed string instrument in a pear shape), and the *ruan* (a four-stringed instrument in a rounded shape). The stage props include folding fans, square handkerchiefs, Bawang whips.

Er'rentai performances can be categorized into two styles, western-style and the eastern-style.[3] According to Huo Banzhu, the eastern-style was founded in Wulanchabu County, located in the northwest region of Inner Mongolia. Due to its location, the eastern-style is significantly influenced by residents of Shanxi province and other nearby areas with Han majority migrant residents.

The western-style originated in the center of Hohhot and the surrounding Mongolian villages. The description of *er'rentai* performance in the opening section should be described as western-style, because of its locale in villages nearby Hohhot. Historically, western-style *er'rentai* was performed in mixed ethnic neighborhoods where both Chinese and Mongolians live. As members of the same community, the villagers have developed a shared language, culture, and customs. Thus, *er'rentai* should be studied in relationship to its unity and conflict of Mongolian and Chinese cultures.

[3] As stated by Huo Banzhu, the categorization of the two styles of *er'rentai* should be relative to the location of the Hohhot city. The western-style *er'rentai* to a performance style that originated to the west of Hohhot City, whereas the eastern *er'rentai* was a founded to the east of Hohhot City.

After *er'rentai* was designated as a "National Intangible Cultural Heritage"[4] in 2006, it received tremendous public attention. Many institutions, such as the Inner Mongolian Arts University, started to incorporate an *er'rentai* performance major in the main curriculum of the Folk Music Department. This tendency also affected scholarly research into *er'rentai* music. Normally, research on *er'rentai* had focused more on the "eastern-style" or more Chinese influenced style, but I was intrigued by this visit to do more research on the little-studied "western-style" that developed in Inner Mongolia. I conducted two more fieldwork trips to Hohhot between June and August 2016. All of these fieldwork visits opened my ears to the study of *er'rentai* music and inspired me to consider *er'rentai* in a cultural and ethnic context.

As a regional style of Chinese folk opera, western-style *er'rentai* is related to a variety of Chinese and Mongolian musical genres, and it incorporates the musical and culture heritages of both ethnic groups. It is likely that the two *er'rentai* styles have similarities and differences, but what causes these individual differences? To what extent do *er'rentai* performers participate in the creation of new pieces or styles? These questions led me to research the connections between Mongolian music and *er'rentai* heritage. Along these lines, my thesis will examine the borrowings of Mongolian traditions in western-style *er'rentai*'s formation and transmission. By researching historical sources and traditional repertoire that display the dualistic cultural structure, my aim is to broaden the scope of research on *er'rentai*.

[4] National Intangible Cultural Heritage is an organization which meet annually to evaluate and determine cultural practices and intangible heritage. The aim of this organization is providing worldwide protection of intangible cultural heritages.

Figure 1.1 An *Er'rentai* Performance
Huo Banzhu (right) and Qiao Erli (left)[5]

[5] Photo by Huo Banzhu, taken in 1988.

The Geographic Location of the Western-Style *Er'rentai*

The western-style *er'rentai*'s formation is strongly tied to a specific geographic environment of Inner Mongolia. Historically, the western-style *er'rentai* was created by folk singers, who came from several counties and cities located in the Inner Mongolian Plateau.[6] The blue line in Figure 1.2 shows the area where the western-style *er'rentai* was believed to be developed historically. Nowadays, the western-style *er'rentai* flourishes in the western rural areas surrounds the Hohhot City. Modern performers inherit traditions from their ancestors and incorporate other styles from nearby areas. The red circle shows the present regions of the western-style *er'rentai*.

Figure 1.2 The Regions of the Western-Style *Er'rentai*[7]

[6] Inner Mongolian Plateau is one part of the Central Asian Plateau, locates in the northern China. Yellow River passes through the plateau, creating a fertile alluvial plain and vast grassland.
[7] "China," Google Maps, accessed December 12, 2016, https://www.google.com/maps/@40.8985646,113.7857012,10z.

Tumed Left Banner (Tumed Zuoqi) and Tumed Right Banner (Tumed Youqi) are two counties where the western-style *er'rentai* is said to have originated.[8] Both counties are located to the west of Hohhot city. Tumed Left Banner is a district of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region under the administration of the regional capital of Hohhot.[9] Tumed Right Banner is another district of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. It is under the administration of Baotou City, which is 59 km (37 mi) to the west, and is located along on the Jingzang Expressway running from Beijing to Tibet.[10] The green circle in Figure 1.3 shows the area of the two counties.

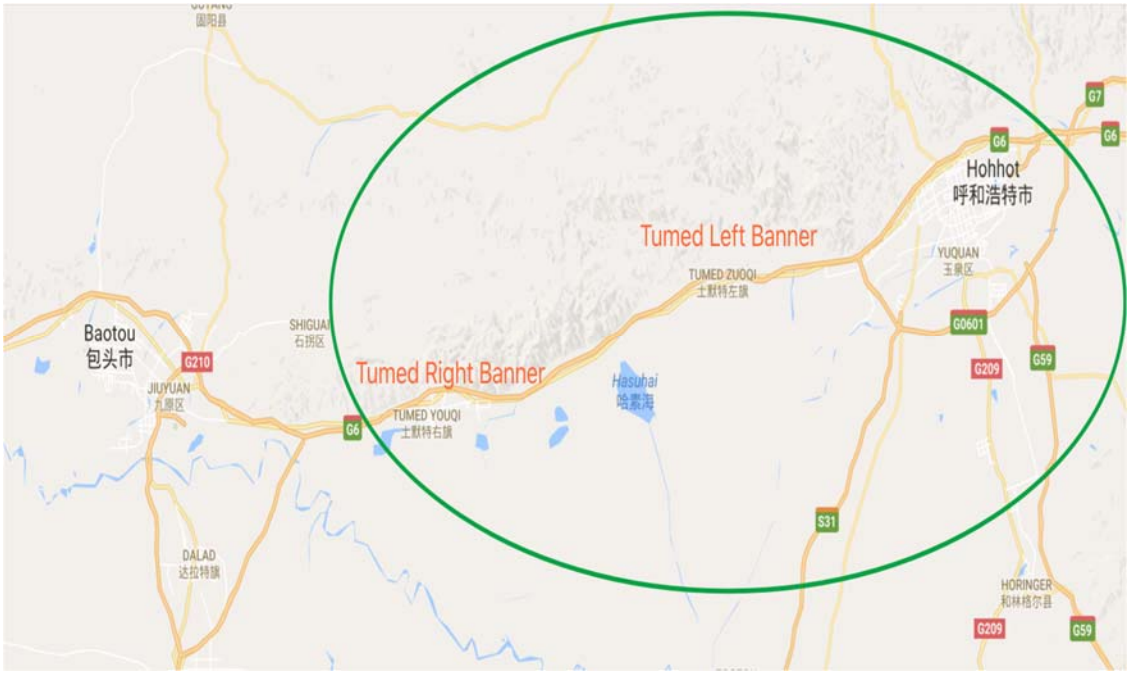

Figure 1.3 Tumed Right Banner and Tumed Left Banner[11]

[8] A banner was an administrative division of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in China, which is equivalent to a county level division in the administrative hierarchy. Banners were first established during the Qing dynasty and have been used in China until now.
[9] "Tumed left Banner," China's Administrative Division, accessed December 12, 2016, http://www.xzqh.org/html/list/2704.html.
[10] "Tumed Right Banner," China's Administrative Division, accessed December 13, 2016, http://www.xzqh.org/html/list/2716.html.
[11] "Inner Mongolia Region," Google Maps, accessed December 12, 2016, https://www.google.com/maps/@40.8985646,113.7857012,10z.

Geographically, the two counties are situated in the Inner Mongolian Plateau, above the west Ordos Loop. The geographical location is extremely crucial. It has been the heart of western China since ancient times because of its position as a junction connecting Mongolia and China. This location also plays an important role in the economic and social spheres of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. The Mongolian Plateau is one part of the Central Asian plateau. The topography is varied and complicated, with towering mountains, basins of different sizes, undulating plateaus and hills, and flat and fertile plains.

The Tumed Left Banner and Tumed Right Banner lie in basins near the Ordos Loop, a large rectangular bend of the Yellow River in central China. The Great Wall of China cuts across the center, roughly separating the sparsely populated north.[12] The orange circle in Figure 1.4 shows the geographical terrain of Tumed Left Banner and Tumed Right Banner.

[12] "Ordos Loop," Chinese National Geography, accessed February 25, 2017, http://www.dili360.com/cng/map/623.htm.

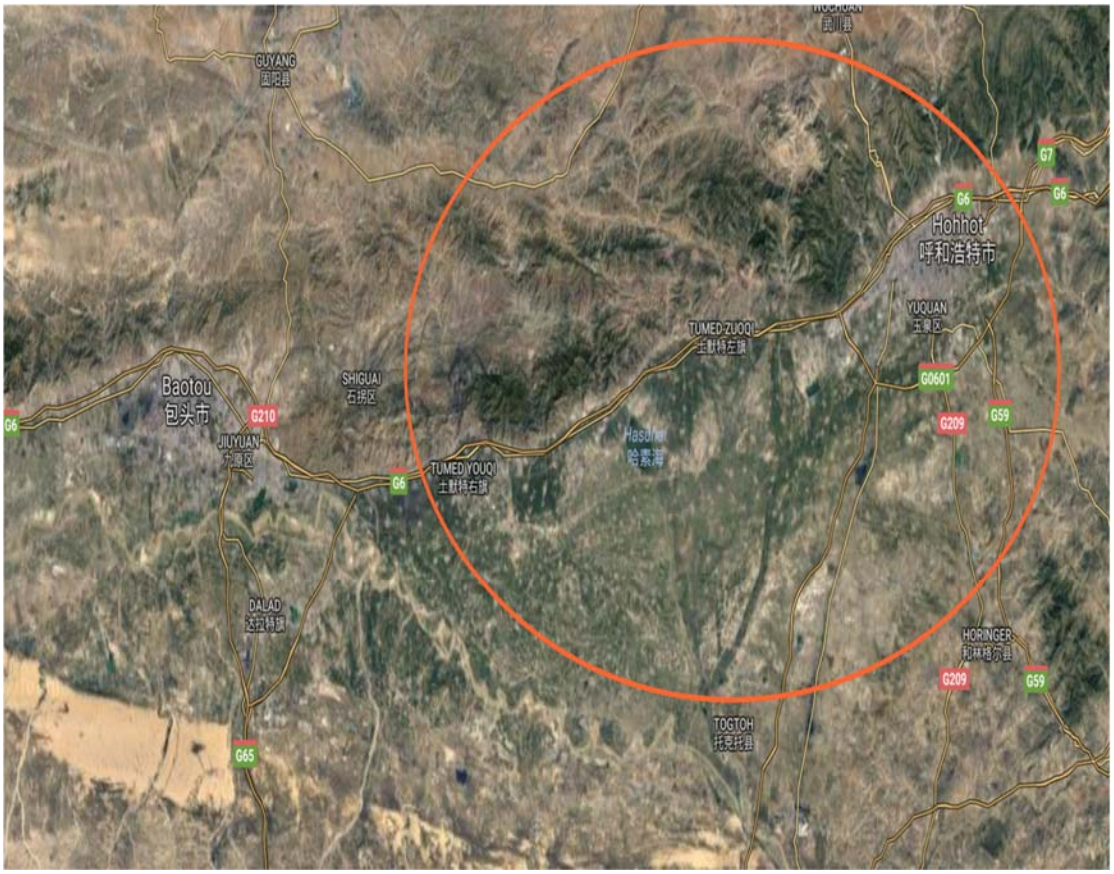

Figure 1.4 Geographical Terrain of Tumed Left Banner and Tumed Right Banner[13]

The varied topography of the two counties provides favorable living conditions so that Chinese farmers and Mongolian herdsmen were able to settle down comfortably. As early as 221 BCE, they began to cultivate the land and graze animals. It is possible that they developed trade for their mutual benefit. Cultural products are the carriers of civilization and stimulate the spread of language, custom, and culture. The western-style *er'rentai* was an innovative product of the two ethnic groups—the Chinese and the Mongolian people.

[13] "Geographical Terrain of Inner Mongolia Region," Inner Mongolia Regional Map, accessed February 26, 2017, http://ditu.bajiu.cn/?id=23.

In the case of the western-style *er'rentai*, its practitioners share many resources and aspects of culture, including farming, herding, marriage customs, language and art. Chinese people and Mongols have similarities in several aspects of life. They respect each others' life styles and have been bound together by the place or community where they live. In addition, the inseparable relationship between music and social life is essential for both ethnic groups. The artistic exchange between these two ethnicities has lasted thousands of years, and as time goes by, the communion between them has gradually gotten deeper and closer.

Literature Review

Research into *er'rentai* started in the early 1950s, before the Cultural Revolution. Between 1950 and1953, several research groups collected folk music in the Hetao region. One of the largest research teams came from the Central Conservatory of Music in Tianjin City, China. In this team, nine members of this team were from the folk music department. After two years of fieldwork, they published some compiled sources of *er'rentai* repertoire.[14] From 1960 to 1965, the Cultural Affairs Department of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region compiled more resources on *er'rentai*, such as *Er'rentai Repertoire* (1961) and *An Introduction to Er'rentai* (1962). These historical primary sources presented a picture of *er'rentai* music in the rural areas. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), all the collected works were banned by the communist party.

[14] Some books were damaged or lost during the Cultural Revolution period (1966-76).

The preservation of *er'rentai* repertoire was restarted in the early 1980s when the ban on *er'rentai* was lifted after the Cultural Revolution. Two musicians, Xi Ziji and Liu Yinwei contributed significantly to collecting and publishing *er'rentai* repertoire. Musicologists, such as Xing Ye and Lv Lie, also made progress in the preservation of *er'rentai* music. At the beginning of the 1990s, many local musicians participated in the research, among whom Huo Banzhu[15] was a representative. As an *er'rentai* musician who was famous for the singing of western-style repertoire, Huo took part in several interviews and fieldwork studies. With these experiences, Huo became familiar with many repertoire and different performance styles, which enabled him to become a leading figure in western-style *er'rentai*.

Er'rentai research can be divided into three primary areas: (1) the study of the origins; (2) the collection of repertoire, and (3) the study of performance style.

There are two theories of the origins of *er'rentai*; the first emphasizes its Chinese origins and the second emphasizes its Mongolian origins. The first publication concerning *er'rentai* origin theories was Mao Tian's *The Origin of Er'rentai*.[16] He discusses both origin theories and presents the musical characteristics of *er'rentai* music.[17] Then, Xi Zijie further explored the Mongolian origin of *er'rentai* and provided a clear picture of *er'rentai*'s development.[18] Xi gave an overview of *er'rentai*'s development in nineteenth century and included lists of repertoire. Contrary to Xi Zijie,

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[15] Huo Banzhu is the interviewee of my fieldwork. He is a leading figure of the western-style *er'rentai*. In the chapter three, I will introduce Huo's educational background and his contributions to the *er'rentai* area.
[16] Mao Tian, "The Origin of *Er'rentai*," *Compiled Repertoire of Er'rentai* 2 (1961): 23.
[17] Mao introduced two theories of *er'rentai* origins: the Shanxi origin and the Inner Mongolia origin. By describing musical characteristics of *er'rentai* music, Mao suggested that *er'rentai* originated from Inner Mongolia region.
[18] Xi Zijie, "*Er'rentai* in the Progress," in *The Compiled History of Er'rentai*, ed. Xing Ye. (Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 2005), 10-12.

Chen Bingrong and Zhou Shaoqing, argued that *er'rentai* originated from Chinese folk music, in particular, Shanxi folk songs.[19] Most of these publications are primary source and provide detailed historical data for latter *er'rentai* research.

The collection of *er'rentai* repertoire started in the early 1950s, which has continued to this day. There are currently five compiled books, three of them open to the public. Among these books, Xing Ye's edition included the most pieces of *er'rentai* repertoire,[20] while Jia Deyi's edition only documented *er'rentai* in Shanxi Province.[21] The edition by the Inner Mongolian Cultural Affairs Department was by far the oldest one, as it was compiled in the early 1960s. According to Huo Banzhu, his master, Liu Yinwei, participated in this edition. As recalled by Liu, most of this repertoire was orally collected from local amateur musicians. [22]

Performance styles were widely studied by musicologists and musicians until the 1980s. The eastern-style has been studied more extensively studied than the western-style, because it originated from Shanxi Province and other bordering provinces that are more centrally located in China. And with the exception of the authors who discuss Mongolian origin theories and Huo Banzhu's "work," no one had done an extensive study of Mongolian influences in western-style *er'rentai*.

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[19] Chen Bingrong and Zhou Shaoqing, *The Study of Zouxikou in the Cultural Aspect* (Hequ: Hequ History Record,1991), 4-6.
[20] Xing Ye, ed. *The Compiled History of Er'rentai*, 4 vols. (Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 2005), 1-740.
[21] Jia Deyi, ed. *The Compiled Er'rentai Repertiores in Shanxi Province* (Taiyuan: Beiyue Press, 2000), 1-892.
[22] Huo Banzhu, interviewed by Shao Luyin, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, July 2016.

Fieldwork

I conducted three major fieldwork trips in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia between June and August 2016. Through a survey of *er'rentai* music in the field, I shall approach Chinese-Mongolian *er'rentai* from the cross-cultural perspective.

The first time I had a chance to watch *er'rentai* performed was close to the stage in a village near Hohhot in February of 2012, the coldest month of the year. Villagers were celebrating the Chinese New Year, praying for good fortune. A stage and four instrumentalists are all that is needed for an *er'rentai* performance. At the beginning of the show, two performers walked onto the stage with the accompaniment of percussion. Suddenly, the music and dance stopped. A high-pitched voice broke the silence: a female performer began to sing. After several repetitions of the first theme, the male performer joined the performance. He spoke and did somersaults at the same time. His high-energy act received warm applause from the audience.

Before my first trip, I contacted with one of the two leading *er'rentai* singers—Huo Banzhu. In June 2016, I flew to Hohhot and started my first period of fieldwork and devoted to understanding Huo's musical experiences and personal performance style. Restricted by funding, I stayed in Hohhot for only a week. Before the second field trip in early July 2016, I approached Huo by telephone and skype interviews, getting more information of his recent performances and other events. In addition, I procured articles, collected materials both online and in the local libraries. After carefully analyzing the data on *er'rentai*, I went on my second field trip. This time, I interviewed Huo at the Western Inner Mongolian Folk Art School. We discussed the contemporary state of *er'rentai* and the problems with teaching and training students *er'rentai*. Huo expressed

the concerns about the lack of students in his area, suggesting some ways to attract a variety of students in the future. Our third meeting took place in Qiaoqi, a village near Hohhot. I followed Huo and his team as they interviewed a local musician. This field trip lasted a couple of days, and we collected two versions of one piece—*Hailian Flower*. During the process, I interacted with local *er'rentai* musicians and became familiar with this genre in the rural context.

The primary subject of my research, Huo Banzhu, is a musician, educator, and researcher in the *er'rentai* field. Huo frequently participates in *er'rentai* performances and tours, presenting a unique musical style on the stage. Up until now, he has still been spending much time practicing his singing and dancing skills. Huo was hired as an instructor in the Inner Mongolian Arts University. With more than ten years of teaching experience, he has been exposed to the newest studies related to *er'rentai* and other types of Chinese-Mongolian folk music and culture aspects. He also developed a systematic pedagogy of *er'rentai* teaching.

His master, Liu Yinwei, is a figure of authority in the performing and teaching field.[23] Liu built his teaching philosophy while he worked in the Inner Mongolian Arts School. As Liu's proud disciple, Huo Banzhu not only inherited most of Liu's pedagogical theories, but he further developed new methodologies and applied them to the everyday practice of *er'rentai*. Finally, Huo continued to dedicating himself to the

[23] Liu Yinwei (1918-91), born in the Hesiyingzi village, administrated under Baotou city. In his early age, he studied *khuuchir* (a four-string Mongolian fiddle) and *sanxian* (a three-string Chinese plucked instrument) from street musicians Wang San and Wan Gaisuo. In 1946, Liu started his career in Baotou, Inner Mongolia. Among his works, *Dajinqian* and *Xiaoguafushangfen* were regarded as two significant pieces of the *er'rentai* tradition. From 1959, he worked as a professor at the Inner Mongolia Arts University. In his later years, he devoted himself to the study and practice of *er'rentai*, cultivating many younger *er'rentai* performers and teachers.

study of *er'rentai*. He has conducted several fieldwork trips to villages in the Tumed Right Banner, Hohhot. The majority of the musicians he has interviewed are amateur performers whom he has known for years. He has always been welcomed to their homes and has collected songs or excerpts that were unknown to outsiders. After collecting new songs or excerpts, Huo Banzhu and his team would interpret the materials and practice them in the classes.

My thesis is structured around my three fieldwork trips to Inner Mongolia focusing on Huo Banzhu. Inevitably, however, I will discuss *er'rentai* both from the perspectives of Huo and myself. As an outsider, I watched and participated in some *er'rentai* activities. Although I benefitted from these experiences, I rely heavily on Huo Banzhu to help me conduct the research and assist with theoretical analysis. In the next chapters, I draw from these fieldtrips to describe Huo Banzhu's musical life in detail, and provide a more comprehensive and accurate picture of Chinese-Mongolian *er'rentai*.

Methodology

Two methodologies will be used in my research: one that focuses on the interviews, observations, and conversations in the process of field trips, and one that uses musical analysis to demonstrate the borrowings of Mongolian music culture in the formation and transmission of Chinese-Mongolian *er'rentai*.

The first methodology is a "person-centered" ethnographic approach. As I explored Chinese-Mongolian *er'rentai* in rural and urban contexts, I realized that ethnicity and geographic location are two essential factors that influence the formation of this genre. Ethnicity or ethnic group is a social classification of people who share a common language, origin, ancestry, cultural heritage, and other such identities with

others in the group(s). The issue of ethnicity has been further theorized in cultural anthropology and other humanities fields. For example, James Peoples and Garrick Bailey define "ethnic group" in their book *Humanity: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* as follows:

> In essence, an ethnic group is a named social category of people based on perceptions of shared social experience or ancestry. Members of the ethnic group see themselves as sharing cultural traditions and history that distinguish them from other groups…One of the more complicated aspects of ethnicity is that an individual's ethnic group identity is seldom absolute. A person may assume a number of different ethnic identities, depending on the social situation. [24]

In the case of Chinese-Mongolian *er'rentai*, we can see the acculturation or mixing of two ethnic groups who have long been in contact. The Chinese and Mongolian groups did not merely trade goods and assets in the bordering markets, they also adopted the social patterns of the other group. During the acculturation process, some traditional or historical cultural features are kept intact, some similar cultural characteristics are combined, and then new cultural traits are generated. One example is the early development of *er'rentai*. Chapter Two will discuss *er'rentai*'s Mongolian-related origins and provide more historical detail of *er'rentai*'s acculturation process.

I utilized several field work techniques to acquire primary data, including participant observation, interviews, and conversations, as well as case studies of an *er'rentai* musician's personal history and genealogical information. My field trip to Huo Banzhu's musical school gave me a chance to experience *er'rentai* music. To see *er'rentai* from a variety of angles, I conducted fieldwork through the method of participant observation. Following the guidance of Huo Banzhu and his research group, I

[24] James Peoples and Garrick Bailey, *Humanity: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2014, 10th edition), 367.

interacted with *er'rentai* musicians and school affairs during the trips, observing and participating in the process of collecting and documenting folk music and culture. This experience and the materials that I collected in the field presented a new and more vibrant picture of *er'rentai* as a more oral-oriented tradition that is less structured, with more room for spoken dialect in performance. Based on this fieldwork, I re-evaluated my understanding of this genre and reconstructed some of the questions I might use in the following interviews and conversations. By using the method of participant observation, my interpretations of *er'rentai* have been strengthened, my research scopes defined, and my insights into the culture have broadened.

In terms of primary sources, I mainly used interviews and conversations to learn about *er'rentai*. I conducted several interviews with Huo Banzhu to better understand his musical life and mentoring relationships. As an *er'rentai* musician, Huo is one of the professionals in the area of performing and teaching. Our discussions involved many aspects of Chinese-Mongolian *er'rentai*, including multiple origin theories, training and teaching, and future development.[25] These interactions played an important part in enriching my perceptions about Huo Banzhu and his musical career, providing insights into the current state of folk music.

I also included historical primary sources in this thesis, such as compiled *er'rentai* scores, government publications of *er'rentai*'s history, musical records, and *er'rentai* musicians' oral accounts. Moreover, historical secondary sources are incorporated to introduce *er'rentai*'s status in the contemporary society.

[25] The oral instruction nature of *er'rentai* has led to diverse theories and hypotheses of its origins. These theories and hypotheses are addressed by local *er'rentai* musicians. In my thesis, I focus on Huo Banzhu's understanding of the *er'rentai* origin theory. At the same time, I also compare other theories with of Huo's, trying to present the ways *er'rentai* was formed and developed.

Musical analysis will be used to illustrate the influences of Mongolian musical characteristics on the style of *er'rentai*. Specifically, the borrowing of Mongolian music and culture will be addressed in terms of scales, melodic contour, form, instrumentation, language and lyrics. In addition, the musical analysis of traditional Mongolian folk songs and instrumental music will be taken into consideration.

To address the musical acculturation between the two ethnic groups, scores and transcriptions will be included in this study. Some scores are cited from *A Comprehensive Study of Er'rentai*,[26] others will be shown in transcriptions.[27]

The purpose of the scores and transcriptions is to analyze and classify the musical similarities between *er'rentai* music culture and Mongolian music tradition. Once the scores and transcripts are listed, I will identify the musical characteristics of each example and compare them based on the genre and musical styles. The goal of this analysis is to locate the musical borrowings between Chinese and Mongolian music, and to demonstrate the acculturation phenomenon in the music production process.

[26] *Comprehensive Study of Er'rentai* is a series of books, compiled and published by Inner Mongolian Press in 2005. It includes 6 columns, covering variety aspects of *er'rentai*: history, traditional repertoire, musicians and groups and literatures. Some *er'rentai* scores are also recorded in the columns. In chapter 5, some cited scores will be analyzed according to the content.
[27] Some detailed scores of songs are unavailable, so transcription is another way to record the music in paper. The transcriptions are based on the recordings that Huo Banzhu provided during the fieldwork process. In most recordings, Huo is the main character. Thus, I choose to use excerpts that have Huo singing or performing.

Thesis Outline

Chapter One serves as an introduction and comprises a brief background of Chinese-Mongolian Er'rentrai and provides an overview of the methodologies used in my fieldwork. In the Introduction, I introduced the landscape where *er'rentai* originates from and discussed how it relates to the acculturation between two ethnic groups—Chinese and Mongolian.

Chapter Two is a sketch of *er'rentai* history from the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) to the present. Through addressing its social and cultural background, I will detail some significant events that play a role in the development of *er'rentai*. This chapter is essential for readers to gain insight on *er'rentai*'s origins, distribution, and future prospects.

Chapter Three is a person-based ethnography that demonstrates my findings during three major fieldwork trips in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China. In this chapter, I explore Huo Banzhu's contributions to *er'rentai*. By detailing Huo's musical career, I hope to present a picture of *er'rentai*'s development in the current folk music field.

In Chapter Four, I compare the musical characteristics of *er'rentai* music with that of Mongolian folk songs. In the process of analyzing mode, melodic contour, and instrumentation, I demonstrate the similarities and differences between the two musical traditions. In addition, I illustrate the borrowings of Mongolian language on specific *er'rentai* pieces.

Finally, the thesis will end with a short conclusion summarizing my findings and providing some perspective on its implications in *er'rentai* research practice.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MONGOLIAN ORIGINS OF *ER'RENTAI*

Introduction

Chinese scholarly writings suggest that *er'rentai* was created by amateur performers in the late Qing dynasty (around 1880-1900s).[28] Born on the slopes and fields, *er'rentai* was soon accepted and favored by farmers, handicraftsmen, and workers. At first, *er'rentai* was performed only at big festivals, such as wedding celebrations and ritual ceremonies. During these days, villagers donated some money to the community and hired *er'rentai* performance groups to perform on the village's local stages. These performers not only studied from each other but also created newer musical styles during the gathering.

There are two predominant origin theories of *er'rentai* commonly discussed among scholars and performers: the first theory regards *er'rentai* as a traditional Chinese folk song genre; the second theory considers *er'rentai* as a folk opera that influenced by Mongolian musical culture.[29] In these studies, *er'rentai* had not yet been considered as having two styles (the eastern-style and the western-style). The notion of two *er'rentai* styles was developed after the Cultural Revolution period (1966-76). Before the 1960s, *er'rentai* was viewed as a broad musical genre that combined a variety of styles into one type. Most *er'rentai* inheritors did not distinguish styles when they talked about the origin(s) of *er'rentai*. I will introduce the history of *er'rentai* more broadly, and then

[28] Zhao Dehou, "*Er'rentai* in Inner Mongolian Region," in *The Compiled History of Er'rentai*, ed. Xing Ye. (Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 2005), 62-64.
[29] Yang Hong, "A Study of *Er'rentai* in Contemporary Social Transition: Interactions between Hequ District Non-Governmental Troupes and Regional Culture" (PhD diss., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2004).

discuss specifically when and how the western-style *er'rentai* developed in the Tumed Right Banner. I will also examine how the western-style *er'rentai* interacted with Mongolian musical culture in this area.

The Early History of the Hetao Region: The Birthplace of *Er'rentai*

Er'rentai was created in the Hetao region, where the Yellow River flows through it and the Loess Plateau is located (Figure 2.1). The Tumed grassland borders the west side of the Loess Plateau, featuring the transition from forest to grassland. The Hetao region is considered to be the birthplace of Chinese culture as well as the agricultural center of ancient China. In the past, this region produced huge quantities of staple crops, such as wheat, cotton, and peanut. Culturally speaking, the Hetao region is a cultural center of northwestern China and belongs to a branch of the Yellow River civilization. The Yellow River carved out channels, floodplains, and plateaus on both of its sides, creating a marvelous land with rich natural resources which allowed for businesses. In addition to the flood plains, grassland and mountains can also be found in the north Hetao region.

Because of its favorable climate and geographic condition, as well as its multiple river channels, the Hetao region was a pivotal traffic and trade center during the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 AD).[30] The Chinese Emperor Wudi set up some open markets on the border for commercial communications between the Han Chinese and the Huns. In the face of scarce natural resources and limited productivity, the Huns primarily relied on the salt and tea supplies from Central China. During the period of Emperor Wudi's

[30] Wang Zijin, "The Historical and Cultural Position of Hetao Region in Qin Dynasty and Han Dynasty," *Ningxia Social Science* 3 (2006): 92-96.

regime, the establishment of trade relations promoted the connections between the Han Chinese and the Huns, increasing the national power of both ethnic groups.

Figure 2.1 The Map of Hetao Region[31]

[31] "Hetao Region," China Highlights, accessed March 11, 2017, https://www.chinahighlights.com/yellowriver/map.htm.

The Hetao region features continuous mountains and crossing river channels. Daqing mountain (Dalan Qara in Mongolian) is a significant landmark in the Hetao region, located next to the Gobi Desert in northern part of Hebei Province (Figure 2.2).[32] Historically, Daqing Mountain has been a place of vital military importance. According to "Tumed Chorophy," Daqing Mountain is the cradle of the northern nomadic groups.[33] In the Qin Dynasty (221 BCE-206 BCE), many northern nomadic groups, such as Di, Hsiung-nu, and Guifang, settled down in this region and invaded the Chinese Central Plain region.

Figure 2.2 The Map of Daqing Mountain in Qin and Han Empires[34]

[32] "Yin Mountains/ Daqing Mountains," Chinese National Geography, accessed December 30, 2016, http://www.dili360.com/cng/article/p5350c3da6ac8337.htm.
[33] Tumed Compilation Committee ed. "Ethnography," *Tumed Chorophy* (Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 1997), 24.
[34] "Qin and Han Empires," Chinese Empire Map, accessed March 15, 2017, http://www.mapshop.com/classroom/history/world/qin-empire-map-w27.asp.

Among the northern nomadic ethnic groups, the Huns were the most powerful threat to the Chinese kingdoms.[35] As early as the Zhou dynasty (318 BC), the Huns had established a country in the Daqing Mountain area. At the end of Warring States period (around 221 BC), the Huns were involved in the battles with the kingdoms of Yan, Zhao, and Qin successively.[36] With victories in the big battles, the Huns have occupied the north of Shanxi province, where the main population of Han Chinese resided at the time.

After a thousand years of substantial migration, the immigrants gradually settled down in the Hetao region and brought their life styles and cultural traditions there. The conflicts and collaborations between the northern nomadic ethnic groups[37] and neighboring agrarian groups continued into the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 AD). When Emperor Chinggis Khan died in the early twelfth century, his four sons inherited their father's ambition and pursued conquests in the lands of East Asia and Middle Asia. With vast lands and a strong army, the Mongols achieved significant military success in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In this "golden era" of Mongolian history, the Mongols implemented religious, economic, social, and political policies in the occupied regions. Despite the influence of Buddhism and the Chinese culture, the Mongols still maintained a traditional Mongolian spirit and traditional values in their everyday living.

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[35] Larry Moses and Stephen A. Halkovic, *Introduction to Mongolian History and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1985), 17-18.
[36] Tumed Compilation Committee, "Ethnography," 30.
[37] The Huns originated to the western part of Central Asia and lived during the Northern and Southern dynasties (420-589 AD). The Mongols originated in the eastern side of the Central Asia and lived around 1162-1227 AD.

The Chinese and Mongolians became the largest ethnic groups to reside in the Hetao region during Yuan dynasty (Figure 2.3). After fifteen years of regional war, the nomadic groups in the Mongolian plateau ruled all of China.[38] Although there were regional wars and cultural conflicts in the Hetao region, the two groups of people were closely related. They exchanged goods, currency, and other tangible assets. Their interactions also spread intangible assets, such as culture, language, and customs. As a military and economic pivot, the Hetao region has had a long history of being the contact point between the Chinese agrarian culture and the Mongolian nomadic culture.

Figure 2.3 The Yuan Dynasty Map[39]

[38] Bat Ochir Bold, *Mongolian Nomadic Society: A Reconstruction of the 'Medieval 'History of Mongolia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 3.

[39]"The Yuan Dynasty Map," Yuan Dynasty, accessed March 29, 2017,

The Origin of *Er'rentai*

Er'rentai was created as multiple groups co-habited and struggled for power in the Hetao region after the collapse of the Yuan dynasty. With the fall of the Mongolian Empire, numerous group leaders were fighting for the supremacy in the void left by the Mongols.[40] The unceasing regional wars and civil conflicts led to internal instability and many other public emergencies in northwestern of China. The final defeat of the Mongolian Empire in the Chinese-Mongolian wars in 1368 AD removed the Mongols from their hegemonic status in the Hetao region. To reinforce the defensive lines on the border, the emperor of the Ming dynasty set up several military towns in the whole region. However, Mongol armies frequently broke through these defensive lines. Under the pressure of the Mongols' attack and plunder, Chinese people who lived in the military towns were forced to accept the Mongolian culture and customs due to the Mongols' frequent invasion and trade demands. In the middle of the Ming dynasty (around 1461 AD), the Mongols took complete control of the Hetao region and promoted Mongolian culture there. Trade activities between the Chinese and Mongols were permitted and governed by Mongolia Khan and continued until the end of the Ming dynasty.

As an area inhabited by multiple groups, social changes in the Hetao region follow three major procedures: inhabitation structure change, social intercourse, and multi-ethnic group establishment. The first two processes were achieved during the Yuan dynasty, around the fourteenth century. The third process was developed during the Qing

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https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=&url=http%3A%2F%2Fshabeeryuandynasty.blogspot.com%2F2012%2F02%2Fmap-of-yuan-dynasty.html&psig=AFQjCNG2rzUgvUNfz3Uml0afUIuh2-4VTA&ust=1499748712925095.

[40] Robert James Miller, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1959), 1.

dynasty (1644-1912 AD). In the seventeenth century, the Qing court established two distinctive administrations: the Inner Mongolia Division and the Outer Mongolia Division. The Beijing Ministry directly governed the Inner Mongolia Division, and the Outer Mongolia Office was responsible for the Outer Mongolia Division.[41] Both divisions were further divided into medium-sized administrative units, equal to the "banners." Tumed Left Banner and Tumed Right Banner were included in the Inner Mongolia Division in the early seventeenth century. Despite the boundary and administration changes that the Hetao region had experienced during the Qing dynasty, only the banner of the Inner Mongolia division was considered a part of China and has been used until the twentieth century.

The Mongols and Chinese also explored advanced production modes in the Hetao region. As Mongolian herdsmen settled down in the Central Plain, they began to study agriculture and irrigation techniques from Chinese peasants. Although it is difficult to determine when the Mongols started their agricultural activities in the Hetao area, it is commonly believed that the Mongols had been to the Hetao region several times to procure grain and livestock in the late Ming or early Qing dynasty. According to *A Study of Qing History*, the Qing court published the Land Settlement and Registration Ordinance in both the Tumed Banners of Inner Mongolia Division, leasing land to the immigrants. In addition, the court provided cultivation and irrigation techniques for the new Mongolian immigrants, helping them to start life in the Hetao region.[42] With great efforts that the Qing courts have put in the Hetao region, the Han Chinese and the

[41] David Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia: Pastoral Mongolian Society and the Chinese State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9.
[42] Xu Ran, "The Relation Between the Agriculture and the Animal Husbandry in the Ordos Region in Qing Dynasty" (M.A. thesis, Shanxi Normal University, 2008).

Mongolian people increased agricultural and economic productivity and thereby improved communication and cultural interaction as well.

The establishment of the Qing dynasty signaled a new national relationship in Inner Asia. By unifying various Mongolian tribes and Ming Chinese remnants, the Manchus attempted to extend their political rule and military power in the borderlands, specifically, the Outer Mongolian Division. Despite the Manchus' strict laws, these border areas remained "ethnically and culturally separate from the rest of the Qing's domain to the end of the dynasty."[43] In addition, interactions among the different ethnic groups became much more common in the borderlands. Such a tolerant social environment allowed for developments in the fields of literature, art, and religion.

In the process acculturation between the Han Chinese and Mongolians, *er'rentai* was created by the two ethnic groups at the end of nineteenth century (late Qing period).[44] Most scholar agrees that *er'rentai*'s closest predecessor is a Mongolian folk song genre called *zuoqiang* that was performed around the end of the Qing dynasty (around the 1880s)."[45] *Zuoqiang*, refers to a musical performance in which performers sit in a circle and sing with the instrumental accompaniment. This performance style was popular in the rural areas and has extended to the early Republican era (1912-1949) with the new names *er'renban* and *sixuanwanyixiaoban*.[46] During the Second Sino-Japanese

[43] Nicola Di Cosmo, "The Extension of Ch'ing Rule Over Mongolia, Sinkiang, and Tibet 1636-1800," vol. 9 of *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 117-118.
[44] Huo Guozhen, "All I Know about *Er'rentai*," *Suiyuan Newspaper*, January 20, 1953, 2.
[45] The name of *Zuoqiang* came from the oral history of Chinese musicians. *Zuoqiang* means "sit and sing." It was named by Chinese scholars in the early twentieth century.
[46] Both *er'renban* and *sixuanwanyixiaoban* refer to a musical genre that *er'rentai* originates from. *Er'ren* means "two people" and *ban* means performance group. *Sixuanwanyixiaoban* is a full name for *er'renban. Sixuanwanyi* indicates "the string instruments" and *xiaoban* means "a small performance group."

war period (1937-1945) of the Communist party, some Chinese musicians who worked at the revolutionary base were dedicated to collecting folk music in the rural areas. They discovered this folk opera genre and renamed it as *er'rentai*. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, several *er'rentai* performance groups emerged in the Shanxi province and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. These *er'rentai* musicians composed and arranged many pieces, making *er'rentai* performances more accepted by urban audiences.

As a folk opera genre, *er'rentai* is rooted in oral transmission and individual mentorship. Because of its dependence on individual schools of training, many works of traditional repertoire and other relevant literature are kept by individual *er'rentai* musicians. Because of this and also due to the lack of a systematic training of notation, it is difficult to determine the original source of a given work of repertoire.[47] The tendency towards individual transmission and archiving also made it difficult to confirm the origins of *er'rentai*. Early musicologists, such as Huo Guozhen and Xi Zijie in the 1970s[48] tried to compare the origin theories of individual *er'rentai* musicians with the ones that have been recorded in the Qing dynasty writings. After examining all of the possible theories, they reached the conclusion that *er'rentai* was created in 1898 during the late Qing dynasty. However, there are still many hypotheses about the geographic location of its origin. Based on my study, I will introduce two prevailing theories of *er'rentai*'s origin: one is the Shanxi (Chinese) origin and the other is the Tumed Banner (Mongolian) origin.

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[47] Based on my study of *er'rentai*, I have found several editions of the same piece, *Dajinqian.* These editions share a similar melodic contour, but with different rhythmic patterns or ornaments. It is hard for researchers to trace the original edition.

[48] Huo Guozhen and Xi Zijie are two of the leading musicologists in the *er'rentai* field. Their topic includes the "origins of *er'rentai*," "the musical characteristics of *er'rentai*,"and "two styles of *er'rentai*."

Shanxi (Chinese) Origin

The theory of Shanxi(Chinese) origin is recorded in the regional chronicles of Shanxi Province, China. Based on the historical record in the *Baotou Cultural Chronicle*, *er'rentai* was born in the Guanxu reign of the Qing dynasty, around 1886.[49] Contemporary Chinese scholars Wang Shiyi and Li Ye concurred with the statement that "*er'rentai* can be traced to the Shanxi province during the late Qing dynasty."[50] In the Shanxi volume of The Collection of Chinese folk song, *er'rentai* is categorized as a traditional genre of Chinese music and said to have been: "…derived from Shanxi province and has been passed down by Chinese folk musicians in the northwestern region of China."[51]

Shanxi province is located in northern China and faces the west toward the Taihang Mountains.[52] Shanxi province borders four provinces in the northern China: Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region to the north, Henan Province to the south, Shaanxi province to the west and Hebei Province to the east. The Yellow River runs through the Shanxi province, nourishing the land and lives. As early as the Shang dynasty (1571-1046 BC), Chinese civilization was developed in this land. Now, the majority of residents are still Chinese and Mandarin is the local language.

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[49] Baotou Compilation Committee ed, "History," *Baotou Cultural Chronicle* (Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 2001), 6.
[50] Wang shiyi and Li Ye, *The Collection of Chinese Folk Song: Inner Mongolian Music* (Beijing: People's Music Press, 1988), 55.
[51] Jia Deyi, et. "Shanxi," in *The Collection of Chinese Folk Song* (Beijing: People's Music Press, 1987), 34.
[52] Taihang Mountain and its ranges run west from the edge of the Loess Plateau in Shanxi province to the east of the North China Plain.

The theory of Shanxi's origin is associated with a historical event—zouxikou. Xikou is an important military gate of the Great Wall. Zouxikou refers to "going out of the west gate of the Great Wall to make a living." In the late Ming dynasty (around 1640 AD), the Ming court established several trading towns near the Great Wall. These business towns created conditions for Chinese businessmen and farmers to travel to Mongolia.[53] However, this road was closed after the Manchus (Qing court) grabbed the power and ruled Central China. In the early seventeenth century, the Manchu emperors banned all interactions between the Han Chinese and the Mongolians. The Chinese were not allowed to pass from Central China to the north Ordos region. As a result, Chinese and Mongolian residential areas in the Mongolia Division were kept ethnically separate from each other until the thirteenth year of the Kangxi reign (around 1962 AD), when the Emperor Kangxi relaxed the regulations of the immigration policy and gave Chinese farmers permission to cultivate land in the Mongolia Division.[54] In addition, the court provided cattle and seed to the incoming farmers, and gave them permanent land ownership after the first six to ten years of the cultivation. [55]

According to several Chinese writers, the theory is that *er'rentai* was developed during the process of zouxikou. In Wang Zhanru's article *The Origin of Er'rentai Is Not From Baotou*, he questions the theory that *er'rentai* came from the Mongolian tradition by saying: "*er'rentai* was a local form of Chinese folk opera. It was created by Chinese musicians in the Shanxi province." He lists four pieces of evidence that support the Shanxi origin theory. First, one of the traditional *er'rentai* songs is named *Zouxikou*. The song portrays a massive migration from the Shanxi province to the Mongolian Division

[53] Wang Hong, "Exploring the Xikou," *Wutai Mountain* 2 (2005): 3.
[54] Chen Bingrong and Zhou Shaoqing, *The Study of Zouxikou in the Cultural Aspect*, 4-6.
[55] Xi Zijie, "*Er'rentai* in the Progress," 5-7.

in the late Qing dynasty. The lyrics also prove the credibility of the Shanxi origin theory. In the story, a female Chinese farmer whose name is Sun Yulian runs out of the west gate to earn a living. When someone asks her hometown, she always sings: "My hometown is in the Hequ county, Shanxi province." [56] Besides this sentence in the song *Zouxikou*, other clues of *er'rentai*'s Chinese origin can also be found in the lyrics.

The studies of zouxikou also reveal a history of the spontaneous immigration during the drought years to Shanxi province. A number of Chinese farmers and craftsmen left their homes to seek fortune in remote parts of Mongolia. Along the road to the Mongolia division, many immigrants recorded what they saw on the journey to the Mongolian Division and used these experiences to compose poems, artwork, and songs. Scholar Wang Jiuxiong has collected some folk stories about zouxikou.[57] One of them narrates the immigrants' sufferings during the process: "Leave my home to the west, the road is long and rough. My life is filled with hunger and poverty, where is my next stop?"[58]

Based on the above reviews of the Shanxi origin theory, we can conclude that the Shanxi origin theory is derived from the history of zouxikou during the Ming and the Qing dynasty. With references to many primary sources, this theory argues that *er'rentai* is a genre of Chinese folk music origin.

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[56] Wang Zhanru, "*Er'rentai* was not from Baotou," *Baotou Newspaper*, June 20, 1980, 2.
[57] Wang Jiuxiong, "Discussing Zouxikou," *Hequ History Record* 1 (1991), 1.
[58] It is an excerpt of an anonymous folk tale sung by a Chinese farmer. According to Wang Jiuxiong, he collected this story during his fieldtrip in Hequ county, Shanxi province. The story describes the tough journey that immigrates encountered in the late Qing period. Wang was unable to trace the source of this story because it has been passed down with the method of oral instruction. Translated by the author.

Mongolian Origin

The theory of Mongolian origin is associated with the history of Mongolia. In the early sixteenth century, Dayan Khan unified all Mongolian tribes and launched military expeditions into Central China. As a successful ruler, Dayan Khan defeated the Ming army many times and conquered massive areas of land. In the mid-seventeenth century, his grandson Anda Khan led the Tumed tribe to settle down in the Hohhot area. Since then, the areas that Anda Khan governed were called the Tumed Banners. Tumed Banner is a Mongolian division in the Qing dynasty. It covers the land from the east of the Hetao region to the north of the Shanxi province, including Salaqi town, Baotou town, Wuchuan town, Toketo town and other three towns.[59]

With the opening of trading ports during the Ming dynasty, a number of Chinese came across the Great Wall to seek better lives. One of their destinations was the Tumed Right Banner. At the end of the Qing dynasty (around 1880s), the Chinese population was largely increased in the Baotou and Toketo town. Chinese immigrants brought relatively advanced cultivation techniques to the Tumed Banner. Mongolian residents also shared their herding tradition with new immigrates. During the process of acculturation, Chinese and Mongolian became two official languages in the Tumed Banner.

Influenced by Mongolian culture, *menguqu* (a Mongolian folk music genre) was spreading among the two ethnic groups during the Xianfeng reign of Qing dynasty (around 1831-1861 AD).[60] As stated in the *Suiyuan History Record*, *menguqu* was created by a Mongolian soldier, who was sent to war between the rebels and the Qing court.

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[59] Tumed Compilation Committee ed, "Geographic Location," 7.
[60] Suiyuan Compilation Committee ed, "History Record," *Suiyuan Chorophy* (Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 2005), 2-3.

Suffering from homesickness, this Mongolian soldier composed a song for his loved ones. Other soldiers were deeply moved by his music and started to sing this song in the camps. After the war, this song was circulated widely among the Chinese people who lived in the Tumed Banner. Based on the original melody and Mongolian lyrics of the song, some Chinese musicians added to the accompaniment with Chinese silk instruments such as *sixian* (four-strings instrument) and *yangqin* (hammered dulcimer), as well as the *dizi* (bamboo flute). In the recent study of the Mongolian origin theory, *menguqu* is considered to be the prototype of the *er'rentai* genre.[61]

In the late Qing dynasty (around 1880-1900s), *zuoqiang* was created and developed from *menguqu*. The name of *zuoqiang* comes from its performance style: "sit and perform music." As a musical genre that was influenced by both Chinese and Mongolian cultures, *zuoqiang* incorporates features of the Shanxi folk music and the *menguqu*. Xi Zijie, an *er'rentai* scholar, has taken fieldwork trips to Tumed Right Banner. In his article "The Origin of *Er'rentai*," he recalls his interviews with an older folk *er'rentai* musician, Ren Shushi. According to Ren's understanding, *er'rentai* was brought to her hometown in Shanxi province by Mongolian migrants. Her first impressions of *er'rentai* came from performances during village celebrations. As an eyewitness of *er'rentai*'s development in Chinese villages, Ren Shushi's accounts give the Mongolian origin theory more credibility.[62] In addition, we can find several Mongolian musical borrowings in some *zuoqiang* pieces. Many traditional *er'rentai* repertoire were derived from Mongolian folk songs. For example, the melody of an *er'rentai* piece,

[61] Miao Youqing, "The Reasons that *er'rentai* was formed in the Inner Mongolian Region," in *The Compiled History of Er'rentai*, ed. Xing Ye. (Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 2005), 57-59.
[62] Xi Zijie, "*Er'rentai* in the Progress,"10-12.

Bayinhanggai,[63] was borrowed from a Mongolian folk song with the same name. Due to a dependence on oral transmission, the original Mongolian lyrics of this piece have been lost, but the Mongolian title of the piece, *Bayinhanggai*, reveals its roots in the Mongolian musical culture.

Huo Banzhu has researched on origin theories. He agrees with the theory that *er'rentai* was derived from Mongolian folk songs during the late Qing dynasty. During our interviews, Huo tells a story of a Mongolian *er'rentai* musician, Laoshuangyang.[64]

> I learned from my mentor, Liu Yinwei, that Laoshuangyang was one of the first people to create *er'rentai*. Laoshuangyang was born in the 1850s and raised in the Guyan village of the Tumed Right Banner. He was born with a nice voice and a gift for music. During the festivals and celebratory events, Laoshuangyang was often invited to perform at banquets. Since he could speak both Mongolian and Chinese, he has learned many Chinese folk songs from the Han residents. One day, Laoshuangyang asked a man to play the role of a "Mongolian wife" at the banquet with his singing as the accompaniment. Because the two performers were singing while sitting on the ground, their style was called *zuoqiang*.[65]

As Huo Banzhu stated in the interviews, *er'rentai* was created by an individual Mongolian folk musician and developed by local troupes in the Tumed Right Banner. Not only Laoshuangyang, but also many other anonymous *er'rentai* musicians participated in the creation of this genre. Their stories, sentiments and life philosophies are recorded in the pieces of *er'rentai*, and have been passed down as intangible cultural heritage.

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[63] "Bayinhanggai" is a Mongolian word, meaning "a beautiful and fertile homeland." The name has been used in several Mongolian folk songs. According to Huo Banzhu, the *er'rentai* version of *Bayinhanggai* was composed by armature musicians who lived in the Tumed Banner. The exact date of this song cannot be traced.

[64] As Huo said in the interview, Laoshuangyang was born in the 1850s and died around 1910. He was believed to be the founder of the western-style *er'rentai*. Due to the limitation of scientific techniques in the Qing dynasty, no image and recording was preserved for research purposes. Laoshuangyang's life story and his contributions to *er'rentai* have been passed down orally from generation to generation.

[65] Huo Banzhu, interviewed by Shao Luyin, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, July, 2016.

The Development of *Er'rentai* in the Twentieth Century

The Inner Mongolian region went through several social movements during the Republican era in the Chinese mainland (1912-1949). Since the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the appearance of the Republic of China, the mainland of China has experienced civil war, foreign invasion, and revolution at the political and military levels. Under the leadership of Sun Zhongshan, the revolutionaries ended the Qing monarchy and brought Western democratic thoughts to China. In the face of a changing socio-political environment, two political factions developed among the Mongolian groups. Some Mongolian leaders in the Inner Mongolian region chose the road of modernization by developing education and broadcasting democratic ideas to the public. At the same time, a more conservative Mongolian faction wanted to maintain the traditional social and institutional order. This tense situation in the Inner Mongolia region soon attracted the attention of Republicans in southern China. Soon, the Republic of China established a new founding of five ethnicities: Han (Chinese), Manchus, Mongolians, Muslims, and Tibetans, and forced the conservative Mongols to accept this order. [66]

The Republican's minority policies did not seem to have impeded cultural interactions between Chinese and Mongolians in the Inner Mongolian region. As in the past feudal society, agriculture was the mainstay of the economy in the Republican era.[67] Through the large-scale migration event, the Chinese peasant "zouxikou" migrants who cultivated lands in Inner Mongolia have been assimilated into Mongolian culture. *Dawanyi* was generated in this diverse cultural and ethnic background. *Dawanyi* "singing

[66] Martinus Nijhoff, "Case Studies on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms," *A World Survey* (1976): 391-403.
[67] Albert Feuerwerker, "Economic Trends," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank. Vol. 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 63-118.

while acting," was a genre that developed based on the Mongolian musical characteristics of *zuoqiang*. At the same time, *dawanyi* relates to performing tradition of Chinese folk opera, especially the Shanxi folk opera. In most pieces of *dawanyi*, music and drama are equally important in the live performances. For example, spoken dialogue and acting were commonly used in the performance of the piece, *Xiaoguafushangfen*. The female and the male performers often use exaggerated facial expressions and body movements to represent the personalities of different characters. This performance style has not changed dramatically since the Republican era and has been renamed as *er'rentai* until the present.

Building on the legacy of the first Mongolian *er'rentai* musician Laoshuangyang, many local musicians started to organize theatrical troupes in the Hetao region. Between 1931-1933, more than twenty *er'rentai* troupes have been formed in the northern region of China.[68] According to Huo Banzhu, there was one group that originated from his hometown—the Tumed Right Banner. This troupe had nine members, including the leader Huo Chunzhu and other eight members. As a local troupe, they often performed in the Linhe town and nearby villages. By the 1940s, Huo Chunzhu's *er'rentai* troupe had become the most popular performing group in the Hetao region.[69]

After the Communists had established a new constitution in the Chinese mainland, they emphasized the ideology that all nationalities are part of one great family.[70] Under Mao's leadership, "Inner Mongolia was not to be allowed tailor-made

[68] Wu Min, "Opera in the World: The Social Transformation of *Er'rentai* in the Hetao area" (M.A. thesis, Inner Mongolia University, 2010), 11-13.
[69] Huo Banzhu, interviewed by Shao Luyin, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, July, 2016.
[70]John K. Fairbank, "The Reunification of China," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. DenisnTwitchett and John K. Fairbank. (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 24-38.

policies created by its local government; it had to follow Mao's national Mass Line."[71] Inner Mongolia was supervised by Maoists and Red Guards. In addition, Mongolian residents were subjected to integrate to Maoist thought during the process of cultural assimilation. As a Chinese-Mongolian folk opera, *er'rentai* performances were forbidden anytime anywhere in the Chinese mainland. Local troupes, including Huo Chunzhu's group, were dismissed by the government policies. Most *er'rentai* musicians were forced to quit their performing careers and returned to farming. During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the development of *er'renta*i ceased—with no newly composed pieces and performance practices.

Since very few *er'rentai* records have been preserved during the Cultural Revolution period, I will cite Huo Banzhu's words to illustrate *er'rentai*'s development in the 1960-1970s "*er'rentai* performances were totally banned in my hometown. The villagers no longer hired performing groups to visit during the festivals and celebrations. The whole village was quiet. I had to practice my singing secretly."[72]

Er'rentai's dark years ended by the time of the Chinese Economic Reform in 1978. The economic reforms introduced global market principles to the Chinese mainland by opening the country to foreign investments. With new development in the urban areas, many villagers left their small hometowns to seek job opportunities in the nearby cities and *er'rentai* musicians were part of this migration. They not only contributed to city construction, but also brought their local cultures to the urban areas. During the 1980-90s, several city concert halls began to invite *er'rentai* musicians to perform for the urban

[71] David Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia: Pastoral Mongolian Society and the Chinese State*, 103.
[72] Huo Banzhu, interviewed by Shao Luyin, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, August 2016.

public. Under the influence of urbanization, many *er'rentai* performing groups had moved to the city stages and started new careers in big cities.

At the same time, national universities and large regional colleges started to set up folk music departments and offer bachelor degrees in *er'rentai* performance. Along these lines, Inner Mongolia Arts University was the first academic institution that provided professional training in *er'rentai*. In 1997, Huo Banzhu was hired as an *er'rentai* instructor by the folk music department of Inner Mongolia Arts University. Since then, Huo has been devoted to the teaching and research of traditional *er'rentai* repertoire.

In another realm, the music publishing industry began to recover after its downturn in the Cultural Revolution period. Since 1977, many *er'rentai* studies have been conducted by musicologists, composers and *er'rentai* performers. According to Huo Banzhu, Wang Shiyi was the first to propose that *er'rentai* be classified into two styles at two academic conferences held in Hohhot in 1987.[73] Wang Shiyi was the deputy director of the Cultural Affairs Department of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region from 1981 to 1988. During his term of office, he devoted himself to collecting and preserving folk music and culture in the Inner Mongolia Region. At the academic conferences in 1987, Wang proposed a theory that *er'rentai* could be categorized into two performance styles based on their place of origin. Moreover, Wang also suggested that Laoshuangyang was the creator of western-style *er'rentai*.[74] Under his leadership, many researchers and local musicians conducted fieldwork in the rural areas in the northwestern provinces of China,

[73] The two academic conferences have not been recorded at that time, therefore no recordings or meeting minute can be traced for reference. However, Huo has attended these conferences and recalled the main purpose of these meetings. According to Huo, Wang Shiyi was the person who proposed the proposal that *er'rentai* could be divided into western-style *er'rentai* and eastern-style *er'rentai*.

[74] Wang Shiyi, "Discussing Western-Style *Er'rentai*," Inner Mongolia Fine Arts 2 (2008): 56.

including Shanxi Province, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and Qinghai Province. Over several years, they collected oral folklore materials and interview recordings to support Wang's theory of two *er'rentai* performance styles. In more recent studies, researchers have focused on the contemporary status of individual *er'rentai* performance groups. Through exploring the performance styles of western-style *er'rentai* and eastern-style *er'rentai* performance groups, they have provided more detail in distinguishing the two *er'rentai* styles on its origins. Among them, Wei Linlin and Xing Ye contributed significantly to the study of *er'rentai*. Wei discussed the contemporary status of western-style *er'rentai* in the urban areas. Meanwhile, Xing participated in the compilations of traditional *er'rentai* works. However, the detailed comparison of two styles *er'rentai* in terms of musical characteristics is still in need of more attentions.

As Huo Banzhu stated in the interview: "With efforts from individuals, schools and government, there will be more opportunities for *er'rentai* musicians in the near future."[75] Although the *er'rentai* field is still facing several difficulties such as insufficient financial support and the declining audiences, individual musicians like Huo Banzhu have continued to be active in this field.

[75] Huo Banzhu, interviewed by Shao Luyin, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, July 2016.

CHAPTER THREE

A LIFE DEVOTED TO ER'RENTAI: A STUDY OF HUO BANZHU

Introduction

This chapter will explore the life and artistic activities of Huo Banzhu as a critical figure in the development of the western-style *er'rentai*. I argue that his activities have been so central to this style that a study of Huo serves as a case-study of the western-style.

Almost every student of *er'rentai* inherits its history and music through oral tradition. In most cases, the western-style *er'rentai* was created and continually adapted by its performers in the everyday performing and training processes, therefore, it has largely relied on oral instruction and person-to-person teaching. During my first observation of *er'rentai*, I was impressed by Huo Banzhu's teaching philosophy and training style. Instead of depending on score reading and recordings, Huo put more emphasis on physical instructions and oral demonstrations. Like many other Chinese folk opera classes, Huo and his students devoted much more time on-stage practicing various expressive modes such as acting, singing, and dancing. Besides acting classes, Chinese music history courses and fundamental music theory courses were also added to the undergraduate curriculum.

Stemming from this class visit and from my previous fieldwork, I began to develop questions about the transmission of *er'rentai*. How many courses are provided in the curriculum? Do instructors use textbooks or any kinds of musical scores in the teaching? With these questions and thoughts in mind, I continue the study of Huo Banzhu and his *er'rentai* career to get an in-depth understanding of *er'rentai*'s process of transmission and its current state of development.

Huo Banzhu's Musical and Educational Background

In the afternoon of July 3rd, I met Huo Banzhu in his office at Inner Mongolia Arts University (Figure 3.1and Figure 3.2). His office is tidy and spacious. A cherry desk sits near the window. Above the desk, there are books, folders, and papers. Pictures, artifacts and photos are hung around the room. The light casts shadows on the wall, making this working environment warm and cozy. Unlike the casual outfit that he wore at the first meeting, Huo dressed in a gray suit. As I came in, he was reading students' assignments. After a brief greeting, I informed him of my research topic and methodologies. Luckily, he seemed interested in my thesis project and was willing to provide valuable suggestions and guidance.

"When was the first time you heard *er'rentai* music?" Huo said, with a hint of curiosity.

"Well, I went to the village of Tumed Right Banner in 2012. It was during the Chinese New Year. Villagers hired a famous Chinese opera troupe to perform on the public stage. People were so excited about them coming and spent several days enjoying the music and the shows. That was my first time watching a live *er'rentai* performance!"

Huo responded, "Cool! I think you were attending the annual festival in the village at Tumed Right Banner." Huo stood up and tried to pull out some photos from the bookshelf. "That is me when I was performing *er'rentai* in Salaqi village." He showed one old photo to me.

"So you grew up with *er'rentai* music. No wonder you became an *er'rentai* specialist in this area." I said. Huo thought for a moment and replied, "When I was young, I made a living by performing *er'rentai*. I learned *er'rentai* unconsciously by growing up

in a music-loving community. In my community, families and villagers are my teachers and trainers. They spent time in making and sharing *er'rentai* music. *Er'rentai* music was handed down from generation to generation and then became a common culture, doctrine, and faith among the villagers."[76]

Figure 3.1 Huo Banzhu in His Office
(Photo by Author in July 2016)

[76] Huo Banzhu, interviewed by Shao Luyin, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, July-August 2016.

Figure 3.2 The Author (left) and Huo Banzhu (right)
(Photo by Author in July 2016)

Influenced by his local musical environment, Huo Banzhu was committed to learning about *er'rentai* music from a young age. He was born in Qiaoerqi village at Tumed Right Banner, Hohhot, in 1956. Qiaoqi is a small village that is surrounded by mountains. The village underwent a series of natural disasters in the late 1950s and early 1960s. During that time, the villagers were struggling for their lives. There were not many sources of entertainment there, although *er'rentai* was one of the most affordable ones. During the off season after farming, people would get together to enjoy *er'rentai* music. Raised in such a small village, Huo was immersed in the local culture and oral tradition, which made him fascinated with *er'rentai* music.

At the age of seven, Huo Banzhu started his early *er'rentai* musical training. Living in a poor but education-oriented family, Huo began learning by himself through watching *er'rentai* performances. Every Spring Festival, the villages of Tumed Right Banner would hire local musicians to perform at temple fairs. Huo would often talk with these *er'rentai* singers and ask them about performance skills and techniques.

After graduating from high school, Huo decided to become a professional *er'rentai* musician. He went to Hohhot and prepared for college admissions. There, he took private lessons with several musicians, and started to show talent in singing and dancing in the western-style of *er'rentai*. In 1976, he became one of the first *er'rentai* students to be admitted to the folk music department of Inner Mongolia Arts School. At that time, there were less than fifteen students in the folk music class.

During his undergraduate education, Huo was trained systematically in score reading, singing, dancing, and acting in Chinese folk music. Being one of the top students in the class, Huo got a chance to study with one of the most famous *er'rentai* musicians—Liu Yinwei (1918-1991). Liu Yinwei was a famous *er'rentai* musician who became an even more important figure after the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1976). His style is considered to be a highly representative of western-style of *er'rentai* (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 Liu Yinwei(far right) and His Students[77]
Chen Wanbao(second right), Zhou Zhijia(middle), Chang Laibiao(second left)

Under the guidance of Liu Yinwei, Huo made great progress in developing his singing and other skills (Figure 3.4). Liu created a new style that largely emphasized the correct spelling, meanings, and expression of the text. The correct spelling is important in *er'rentai* performing because it aids in understanding lyrics that are sung in dialects and multiple languages. Normally, two languages will be used in the lyrics of *er'rentai*—Mandarin and Mongolian. During the study of *er'rentai*, the correct spelling and the proper transliteration will help to solve multiple linguistic misunderstandings and provide standardization rules for beginners. Followed by his master's training, Huo further developed a singing technique that he says combines both Western bel canto and *er'rentai*

[77] Photo provided by Huo Banzhu, taken in 1970s.

traditional vocal technique. For example, he mentioned developing his head voice during his university studies. This singing style enabled him to try different styles of music, making him more popular among various audiences.

Figure 3.4 Huo Banzhu in Singing Class at Inner Mongolia Arts University[78]

After graduating from school, Huo was enrolled in Lanzhou Song and Dance Troupe,[79] studying acting, acrobatics, and martial arts from Jia Shimin.[80] After years of exploration, Huo used a more innovative and appealing way to introduce martial arts and acrobatics into *er'rentai* performances. *Dajinqian* is one repertoire for which Huo made

[78] This photo was provided by Huo Banzhu, taken in August 1980.
[79] Lanzhou Song and Dance Troupe is a local performance group in Gansu province, China. This organization is dedicated to cultivating musicians and dancers in the folk music field.
[80] Jia Shimin is a director. He directed and produced several *er'rentai* repertoire, including *Dajinqian*, *Guahongdeng*, *Muniu*, etc. He applied cinematic skills in the performances, making the show more appareling to the audiences.

contributions to the innovation of choreography and dramatic staging. In the performance, Huo improved upon the use of two traditional stage props: the Bawang whip and the red square handkerchiefs. In the use of the Bawang whip, Huo added acrobatic movements. In addition, he also practiced playing with more than four red square handkerchiefs at the same time (Figure 3.5). His creative contributions to choreography and performance style earned him an award from the Inner Mongolian Folk Art Organization. After that, Huo's version of *Dajinqian* won many awards nationwide.

Figure 3.5 Huo Banzhu Practices the Red Square Handkerchief and the Folding Fans[81]

[81] Photo provided by Huo Banzhu, taken in July, 1983.

In 1991, Huo went back to Inner Mongolia Arts University for a higher education in vocal training. During his days at the University, Huo met his wife Qiao Erli. In the early 1980s, this couple worked in the Hohhot *er'rentai* music band, performing many newly-composed pieces, such as *Guahongdeng* and *Zhaihuajiao*. (Figure 3.6) In 1997, Huo and Qiao founded the "Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School," teaching the younger generation *er'rentai* music. Now, there are about four hundred students enrolled in the school. Some graduates have become teachers and work in the Hohhot primary and middle schools. Others became specialists in performing *er'rentai* after graduation.

Figure 3.6 Huo Banzhu(left) and Qiao Erli(right) Play the Red Handkerchiefs [82]

[82] Photo provided by Huo Banzhu, taken in 1997. Huo Banzhu and his wife were performing *Dajinqian* on the stage of the concert hall at the Inner Mongolia Arts University.

Huo Banzhu's Contribution to *Er'rentai* Education

Unlike recorded Chinese court music, *er'rentai* has largely relied on oral transmission. The first step of learning *er'rentai* is to memorize the existing excerpts or whole repertoire. Then, musicians and vocalists gradually improvise or compose new melodies, rhythmic patterns, and ornaments based on their previous knowledge of the repertoire. Huo followed this route. When he was a student, he was trained systematically in singing, dancing, and acting. As Liu's disciple, he adopted his master's excerpts of repertoire and teaching philosophy. But, Huo did not stop here. He created new singing and dancing techniques on the basis of Liu's foundation. This innovative style has helped establish his reputation in the *er'rentai* field.

Not limited to oral instruction between two individual learners, *er'rentai* has benefiting from mass media, written texts and scores, and other contemporary modes of documentation and transmission. In present teachings, written materials and media tools are greatly incorporated into the *er'rentai* pedagogy. In a national record from 1951, *er'rentai* was officially listed as a musical theater genre that originated from Suiyuan Province (a previous administration's equivalent to the current Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region). Since then, the name of *er'rentai* has appeared in local newspapers, program notes and scholarly papers. Written materials are not the only way to record the scores and literatures of *er'rentai* music. By the late nineteenth century, media and modern techniques were introduced in the households. Technological advancements provided the possibility for musicians and amateurs to utilize multimedia technologies such as recorder and camera, in the process of composing and performing. Among these techniques, audio and video devices were commonly used in *er'rentai*

teaching. Especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, local performance groups and national music schools began recording many tapes of audio-visual instructions, using them for educational and practice purposes.

Although new technologies and pedagogies have been incorporated, traditional oral transmission still plays an important role in *er'rentai* classes. Due to a lack of notation literacy and training, some local *er'rentai* musicians could not provide written scores for students to read. Thus, transcription work needed to be done with the help of outsiders, usually from composers, music theorists, and musicologists. Due to their efforts, many traditional excerpts and repertoire have been preserved and displayed in written format. However, given the oral nature of *er'rentai*, transcription does pose problems. During the teaching process, musicians may improvise and even recompose music. This versatility usually leads to diverse styles, but makes preservation and teaching challenging. To improve this situation, local *er'rentai* musicians have been invited to work in the research institutions and performance groups. Known as a famous educator, Huo has conducted a lot of fieldwork along these lines, collecting musical data in the rural areas. To revive local musical culture, Huo founded a private music school, which is dedicated to promoting national culture and cultivating younger musicians. In his school, project-centered teaching enables learners to involve themselves in every aspect of *er'rentai* performance. Both experienced musicians and beginners may construct a personal musical style through the study. As a leading figure in the *er'rentai* field, Huo's art school sets a model in the private musical associations. In this chapter, I will introduce the basic background of "Western Inner Mongolian Folk Art School" as well as summarize Huo's teaching philosophy.

The Introduction of the "Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School"

The "Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School" is a full-time secondary art school.[83] The school was licensed by the Inner Mongolia Education Department in 1997. The Director, Huo Banzhu was nominated as a representative national intangible culture inheritor soon afterwards.

The Western Inner Mongolian Folk Art School was built in 1993 upon the model of the folk music department at Inner Mongolia Arts University. Two of its leading professors, Sha Hen and Lv Hongjiu, started the folk music department and began to enroll students in the newly created *er'rentai* major. Huo was the director of the student program and was responsible for teaching and admission affairs.

Due to a shortage of funds, the *er'rentai* major at Inner Mongolia Arts University was canceled after three years. As one of the founders, Huo Banzhu decided to continue the *er'rentai* teaching program at the Western Inner Mongolian Folk Art School. In October 1997, the program welcomed its first 56 students. In the beginning, courses in the *er'rentai* program ranged from singing skills to dancing practice. After further adjustment of the curriculum, a repertoire seminar and acting class were also included in the curriculum. On June 11, 1998, the Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School was officially approved by the Chinese Education Ministry.[84] However, finding a school building was not an easy job. After three month of searching, Huo located a three-floor building in the Ruyi district, Hohhot city. This 40,000 square feet building provides

[83] "Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School," Western Inner Mongolia Folk School, accessed March 5, 2017, http://nmgxbyx.com/pic.php.
[84] Liu Hongyan, "A Fieldwork of Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School," *Jiaoxueshiyanyanjiu* 1 (2010): 273.

ample place for students to study, practice, and rehearse. It is the primary building of Huo's *er'rentai* school and has continued to run until the present (2017 as of the writing of this thesis).

Until 2006, Huo's school was defined as a private music school that was not certified to grant diplomas for students. To reform and develop *er'rentai* music, Huo applied to the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region's Education Department to become a degree issuing music school. Since then, the Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School has been issuing secondary and middle school diplomas for enrolled students.

In 2007, Huo's school received certification to grant college degrees in *er'rentai* performance. With its developing reputation and increasing funds, more and more professional *er'rentai* musicians have been invited to join the school as faculty. They bring authentic singing skills and traditional repertoire to the class, attracting many of the students to dedicate themselves to an *er'rentai* major. At the "Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School," students not only enjoy an excellent education, but also benefit from great facilities and valuable experiences.

School Facility and Curriculum Design

The facilities of the "Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School" includes: one practice room (Figure 3.7), two lecture rooms, six student dorms, two offices, one cafeteria, and one student program center. Their inventory of instruments includes one drum set, two *erhu* (two-string Chinese fiddle), two *sihu* (four-string Mongolian-Chinese fiddle), three sets of *dizi* (Chinese bamboo flute), one *sanxian* (three-string fluked lute), one *yangqin* (Chinese dulcimer), one *sheng* (Chinese wind instrument), and two *suona* (Chinese wind instrument). They also have electronic equipment including one video

cassette recorder, two televisions, two audio recorders, more than 100 *er'rentai* music tapes, and one office phone.

Although the school has some limitations in their facilities, the experienced and professional teachers continue to meet the needs of the growing student body. The school's curriculum is designed to cultivate students who will become versatile specialists. Along these lines, the students are offered several courses of study: instrument, dance, voice, fundamental music theory, action, literature, and music appreciation.

Instrumental majors can study both traditional *er'rentai* and electronic *er'rentai* performance. Drum set and saxophone may also be included in the band. In traditional *er'rentai* performance, only Chinese and Mongolian instruments are used. Students usually choose one or two of the following Chinese or Mongolian instruments as their major instrument: *khuuchir* (A four string Mongolian fiddle), *limbe* (Mongolian transverse flute), *yangqin* (Chinese dulcimer), *erhu* (Chinese spiked bowed lute), *pipa* (Chinese four-string plucked lute), *sanxian* (Chinese long-necked plucked lute), *sheng* (Chinese mouth organ), and *suona* (Chinese conical double-reed).

Dance majors study Chinese folk dance and Mongolian folk dance. Students whose major is in *er'rentai* performance need to take both dance classes. Vocal majors primarily focus on voice during the first year and often take folk singing as their major during the first year. Other vocal classes, such as popular singing classes and bel canto classes, are elective courses.

As a private school, the content of the curriculum covers a broad range of theoretical and practical subjects and topics, providing a solid foundation for students who want to have music as their potential career. Unlike most public music schools, students in the Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School have a variety of courses to choose from. Because of the flexible curriculum design, they enjoy more freedom in trying different classes, changing to another major, and even developing their own styles and methodologies in *er'rentai* performing.

Figure 3.7 The Practice Room in the "Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School"[85]

[85] Photo by Huo Banzhu, taken in 2012.

Faculty and Staff

With a history of twenty years, the Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School now has seven full-time instructors in the areas of voice, dance, and acting (Figure 3.8). Two faculty members work in administration in student programs and admissions. In addition to being the Director of the school, Huo also gives lectures and demonstrations every week. Huo has also written several pedagogical textbooks on *er'rentai* purpose. Although some classes still rely on oral instruction, Huo and his team have compiled and edited many existing repertoire. Through these efforts, students now have access to both the written materials and oral instruction.

Name	Nationality	Job
Huo Banzhu	Mongolian-Han	Director and vocal instructor
Huo Yinzhu	Han	Vice Director and Mongolian music instructor
Tuoya	Mongolian	Acting instructor
Wang Xuchun	Han	Dance instructor
Zheng Zhonghe	Han	Shona and drum instructor
Bianjun	Mongolian	Mongolian dance instructor
Wang Hengying	Han	Literature and folklore instructor
Zhang Jierong	Han	Student program
Zhang Shaoqing	Han	Admission office

Figure 3.8 A chart of Faculty and Staff Members

Student Employment

The "Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School" offers a three-year course of study for students with little musical training in *er'rentai* music. After three years of coursework, students are expected to have multiple skills in singing, dancing, and acting. Qualified students will receive a diploma of technical high school in folk music major that is issued by the National Education Department.

During my fieldwork, I observed two freshmen classes—one theory class and one performance class (Figure 3.9). The students in these classes demonstrated their great interest in studying *er'rentai* music, however, some of them seemed to lack training in fundamental music theory. When instructor taught a new piece of music, I was surprised to see that most students had difficulty in reading the score or spelling the pitches. Although first-year students did perform as well in the theory class, they performed much better in the vocal and acting classes. Many students get up at 6 a.m. to do morning vocal and physical exercises. After that, they will head to dance classes and practice until noon. The school provides ample space to practice and rehearse, which creates an encouraging atmosphere for students to take part in the performance activities (Figure 3.10).

According to Huo Banzhu, the employment rate of the students has increased to ninety percent over the past ten years. Most students have been hired by local troupes and performance groups immediately after graduation. Some of them teach music classes in the local kindergarten and elementary school. Recently, the designation of *er'rentai* as Intangible Cultural Heritage has raised its national profile and cultural value. The Chinese government now provides more job opportunities for *er'rentai* musicians and performers, and these *er'rentai* majors appear to be benefitting from these preservationist policies.

Figure 3.9 Huo Banzhu and Students in the Dance Class
(Photo by Author in August 2016)

Figure 3.10 Students in Rehearsal
(Photo by Author in August 2016)

Difficulties in the Development of *Er'rentai* Education

The high employment rate of students in the *er'rentai* major is a solid marker of the success of the *er'rentai* program at the Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School. Good curricular design and dedicated instructors create an environment in which the students are eager for success in their academic performance as well. Based on my interview with Huo, most students find a major related job after graduation; some students even pursue a higher degree afterward.

Despite the high employment rate among the graduates, some still face difficulties in the job market. In a more recent study, the jobs for students in the *er'rentai* major have become much more limited. Huo expressed his concerns of the limited job opportunities for *er'rentai* graduates:

> Most of my *er'rentai* students will graduate with secondary and middle school diploma. This degree is enough for them to find the jobs in the local performance groups. However, they may have difficulties to seek the jobs in the educational institutions due to many schools' requirements of higher education degrees.[86]

There are several reasons for this phenomenon. First, a majority of *er'rentai* lovers and audience members live in the rural areas. They tend to view *er'rentai* music as a hobby and activity for leisure. People in the rural areas will hire local *er'rentai* amateurs to perform onstage only during festivals and ceremonies. Compared with local amateurs, students who have been trained in the professional music schools have a harder time gaining acceptance from audiences in the countryside, due to their high-ticket prices and less traditional performance style. At the same time, *er'rentai* music has not been

[86] Huo Banzhu, interviewed by Shao Luyin, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, August 2016.

sufficiently promoted in the cities. With the exception of *er'rentai* performances that have taken place in school concert halls, there are few performances targeted toward the more urban public. Thus, many students in Huo's school tend to work in local troupes and small performing groups.

After graduates find jobs in the for-profit performing groups, these students might still be confronted with a low-salary situation. Because of limited demand in the city, *er'rentai* performers are largely dependent on income from private lessons and government subsidy. Under these circumstances, some musicians switch to jobs in another field and no longer remain in the music education system. This trend among *er'rentai* musicians to switch careers has brought a negative impact on the development of the *er'rentai* education system. For example, now it is difficult for folk music schools to find professional instructors. In the case of Huo's Western Inner Mongolia Folk Art School, many instructors are in their fifties and sixties, and they are facing retirement in the next few years. Such a situation may accelerate a teacher shortage in the near future.

My study of Huo and his school relies largely on Huo's perspective on the *er'rentai* area. Based on my observations and perspectives of the *er'rentai* education system, I find it may be practical to cultivate folk musicians to compose and arrange new pieces of *er'rentai* music. With the pressure to focus primarily on preserving traditional repertoire, *er'rentai* musicians may be more inclined to spend time on innovation to make the performances more acceptable to the contemporary audiences.

CHAPTER FOUR

AN ANALYSIS ON THE MONGOLIAN MUSICAL BORROWINGS IN WESTERN-STYLE *ER'RENTAI*

The Musical Elements of *Er'rentai*

From the *menguqu* in the late Qing dynasty to the *er'rentai* in the early twentieth century, *er'rentai* has experienced a long development process in the Inner Mongolia region. One branch of *er'rentai*, now known as western-style *er'rentai*, originated from Mongolian folk music and developed from Mongolian nomadic society. Its performance style and instrumentation demonstrates many influences from Mongolian musical culture. The other branch of *er'rentai*, known as the eastern-style *er'rentai*, was formed and developed in the Han Chinese culture area and represents the musical characteristics of Chinese folk music.

Two *er'rentai* styles differ in musical style with contrasts in melodic contour, form, instrumentation, lyrical style, and scales. Western-style *er'rentai* is famous for its lengthy melodic phrases, wide pitch intervals, disjunct motion, moderate tempo and free meter. Eastern-style *er'rentai* is recognized by its short melodic phrases, narrow pitch intervals, a combination of conjunct and disjunct motion, fast tempo and duple meter. Figure 4.1 shows the musical comparison of two *er'rentai* styles.

Style	Western Er'rentai	Eastern Er'rentai
Melodic Contour	wide pitch intervals, disjunct motion.	narrow pitch intervals, a combination of conjunct and disjunct motion.
Form	regular sequences of phrases (two phrases, four phrases, and eight phrases).	a combination of four phrases and eight phrases.
Instrumentation	use Mongolian instruments, such as *Khuuchir* and *limbe* with several Chinese instruments, such as *suona*, *pipa*, *drum*.	only use traditional Chinese instruments, such as *yangqin*, *ruan*, *drum*.
Scales	Gong scale, Shang scale and Zhi scale.	Yu scale and Jue scale.
Lyrical Style	a combination of Mongolian and Chinese languages.	only Chinese.

Figure 4.1 A Comparison of Western-Style *Er'rentai* and Eastern-Style *Er'rentai*

I will briefly analyze two *er'rentai* pieces, *Dayingtao* (western-style *er'rentai*) and *Shiyanghua* (eastern-style *er'rentai*), and demonstrate the differences between the two styles. The melodic contour of the piece *Dayingtao* features disjunct motion and wide pitch intervals, such as the ascending leap of a fifteenth in measures 11,16 and 17. In terms of language, both Mongolian and Mandarin languages have been used in the lyrics (Figure 4.2). Unlike *Dayingtao*, *Shiyanghua* is composed primarily of narrow pitch intervals, short melodic phrases and Mandarin lyrics (Figure 4.3). Although both pieces are written in the Chinese pentatonic system, they vary in specific scales, *Dayingtao* is in the C "Zhi" scale (C, D, F, G, A). *Shiyanghua* is in the D "Yu" scale (D, F, G, A, C). Besides, the use of instruments is also distinct between the two styles.[87]

[87] Detailed explanations of western-style *er'rentai*'s musical features including scales will be introduced in latter sections of Chapter IV.

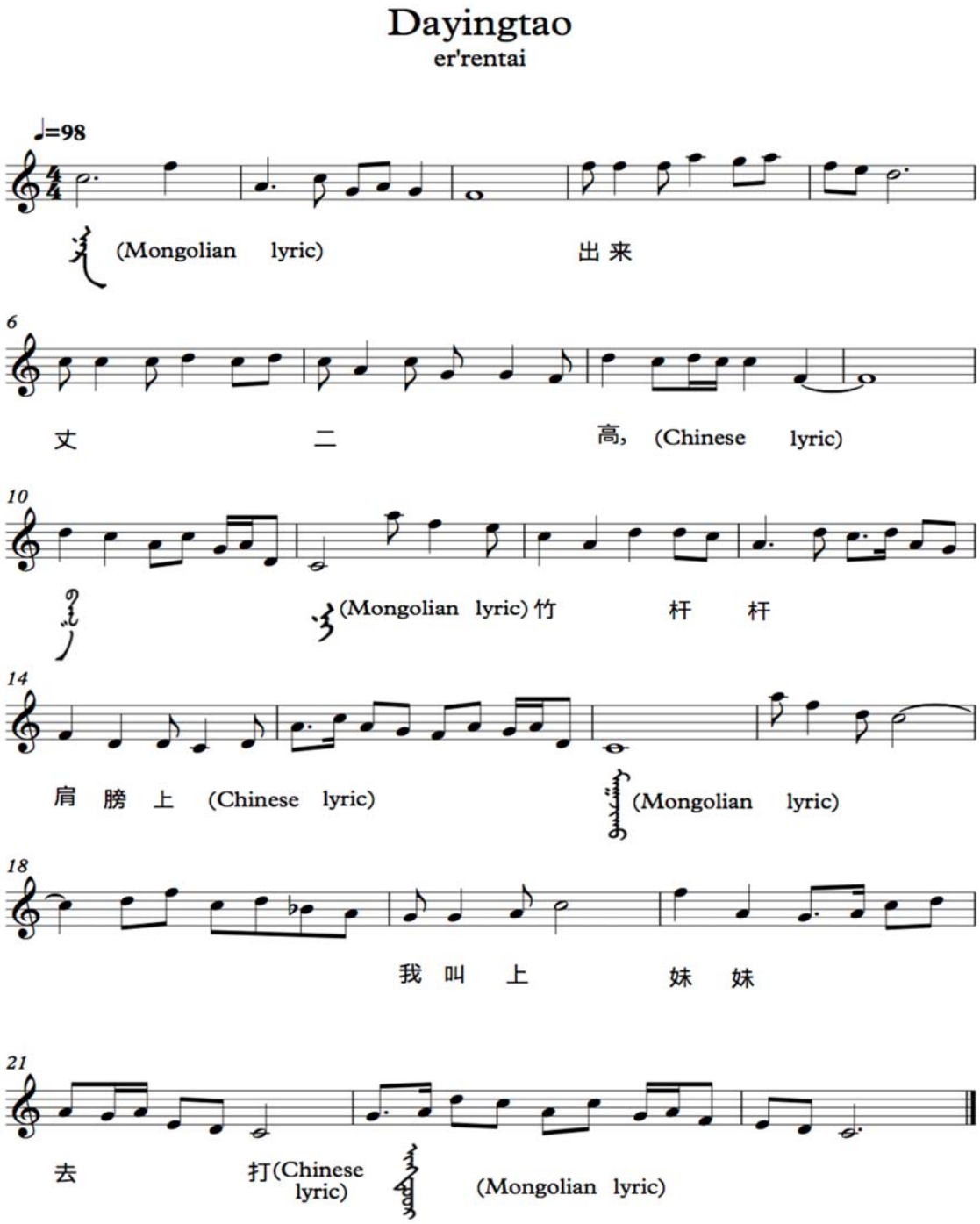

Figure 4.2 *Dayingtao* in C "Zhi" Scale[88]

[88] This transcription of the piece *Dayingtao* (C "Zhi" Scale: C, D, F, G, A) was Huo Banzhu's version. The music was recorded in August, 2016, and the notation was completed by the author in 2017.

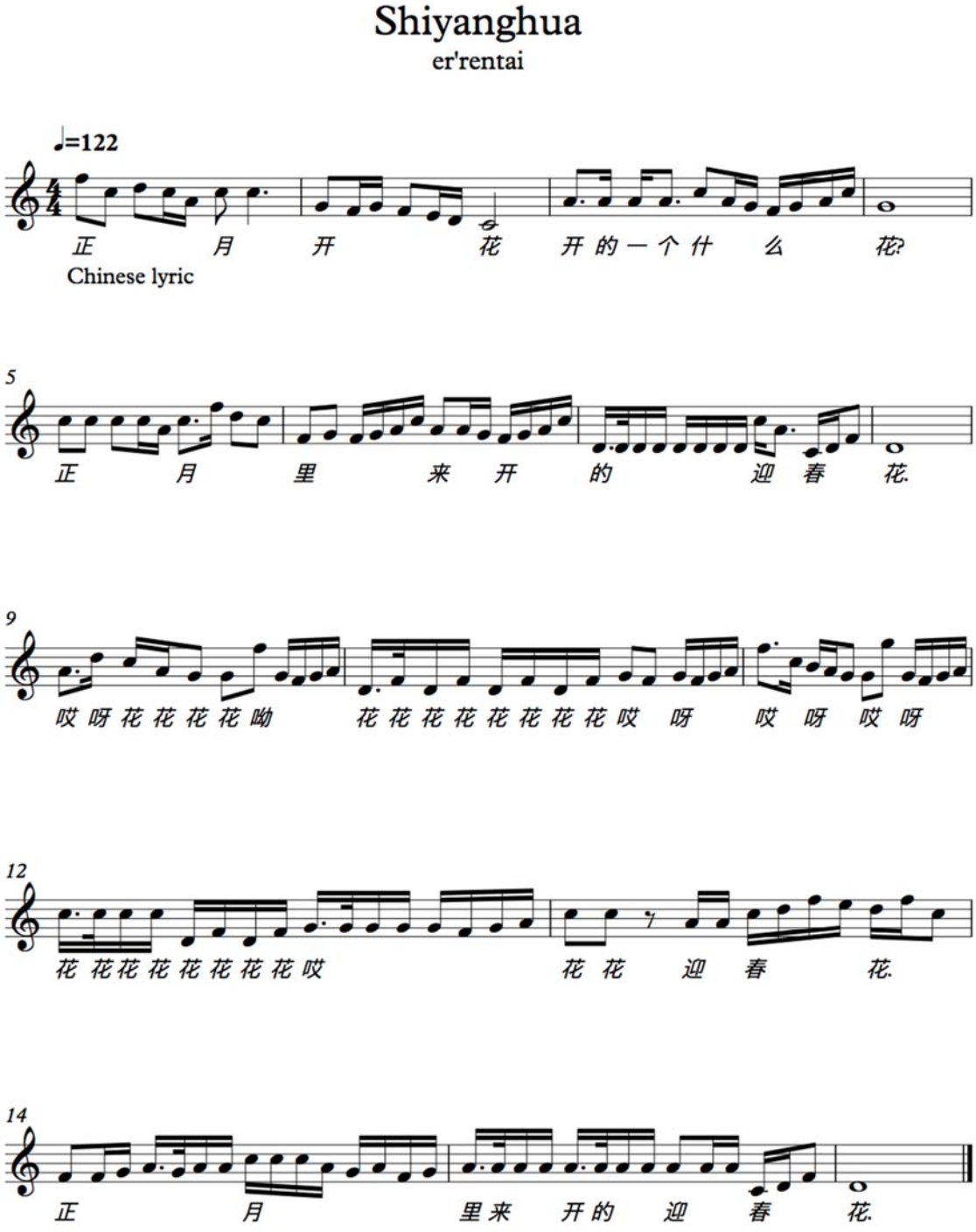

Figure 4.3 *Shiyanghua* in D "Yu" Scale[89]

[89] This transcription of the piece *Shiyanghua* (D "Yu" scale: D, F, G, A, C) was Huo Banzhu's version. The music was recorded in August, 2016, and the notation was completed by the author in 2017.

During interviews, Huo addressed the borrowing of Mongolian musical characteristics in western-style *er'rentai*. As stated by him, "I grew up in a village where Mongolians and Chinese people lived together. In retrospect, many *er'rentai* pieces were sung in both Mandarin and Mongolian and accompanied by Mongolian instruments, such as a *khuuchir* (a four-string spike tube fiddle) and a *limbe* (Mongolian transverse flute). In some village performances, one can hardly distinguish the Mongolian folk songs from the *er'rentai* repertoire because these two genres were performed together.[90] According to this background, I would say that the western-style *er'rentai* was formed and developed based on Mongolian musical traditions."

Inspired by Huo Banzhu's description of *er'rentai*'s Mongolian influences and some musical examples that he had provided,[91] I began to study the musical characteristics of western-style *er'rentai*. By comparing several Mongolian folk songs with traditional western-style *er'rentai* pieces, this chapter demonstrates the similarities between these two musical traditions in terms of scale, melodic contour, form, instrumentation, and language. The stage props and costumes of the western-style *er'rentai* are more strongly associated with Chinese culture, which will not be discussed in this thesis.

[90] Huo Banzhu, interviewed by Shao Luyin, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, July 2016.
[91] Huo provided me some musical scores and videos that would help to understand the Mongolian borrowings on *er'rent*ai music.

Mongolian Influences on Melodic Contour of the Western-Style *Er'rentai*

Er'rentai musicians also started to incorporate Mongolian folk music into their performance styles by citing Mongolian melodies in their *er'rentai* pieces. Some musicians improvised melodies based on existing Mongolian melodies, while others rearranged a few excerpts of Mongolian folk songs as accompaniment to their performances. Among these Mongolian folk songs, *long song* is a representative genre that has a similar melodic contour to *er'rentai* music.

Long song, or *Urtiin duu*, refers to one of the major musical forms of Mongolian folk songs. Similar to *er'rentai*, *long song* is often performed in celebrations, festivals, and other large social events. The melodic structure of *long song* is associated with Mongolian nomadic culture and values.[92] Its most distinct characteristics include lengthy melodic lines, wide pitch intervals, and free meter.

The melodic characteristics of *long song*, such as wide vocal range and disjunct motion, have been applied in many traditional *er'rentai* pieces. Among these features, the disjunct melodic motion is the most prominent feature that displays Mongolia's musical influence on the *er'rentai* genre. Lv Hongjiu introduced the application of disjunct melodic motion in Liu Yinwei's performance style. To show his gifted voice, Liu Yinwei always added occasional leaps of more than a fifth in his singing, such as the seventh, the octave, and the minor ninth. In this way, Liu has brought more musical surprises to the audience, and increased dramatic tension in the *er'rentai* works.[93]

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[92] Carole Pegg, *Mongolian Music, Dance, and Oral Narrative* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press,2001), 44-45.
[93] Lv Hongjiu, "The Melodic Features in the Singing of Liu Yinwei," in *The Compiled History of Er'rentai*, ed. Xing Ye. (Hohhot: Inner Mongolia People's Press, 2005), 391.

Huo Banzhu agreed with Lv's statements about *er'rentai*'s melodic characters, and provided further insight from his research and experience with Liu Yinwei. Huo said, "My mentor, Mr. Liu, trained me to sing the intervals that are larger than an octave. He believed that this performance style would leave audiences with a deeper impression of the music itself."[94]

Bayinhanggai is a traditional piece of repertoire that was recorded in two versions: the *er'rentai* version (Figure 4.4) and the Mongolian version (Figure 4.5).[95] In the *er'rentai* version (C "Zhi" scale: C, D, F, G, A), we can find several examples of disjunct melodic motions, such as leaps of an octave. The Mongolian version (F "Gong" scale: F, G, A, C, D) also presents the use of wide pitch intervals. In mm. 13 of the Mongolian *Bayinhanggai* version, there is a descending leap of an eleventh, challenging the voice range of the singers. The square circles in Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5 mark the primary disjunct motions in the two versions of the piece *Bayinhanggai*.

[94] Huo Banzhu, interviewed by Shao Luyin, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, August 2016.
[95]According to Huo, the *er'rentai* version of *Bayinhanggai* was derived from a Mongolian folk named in the same title. Although the two versions are varied in melody, rhythm, and other musical features, they can be studied in the aspect of melodic motion.

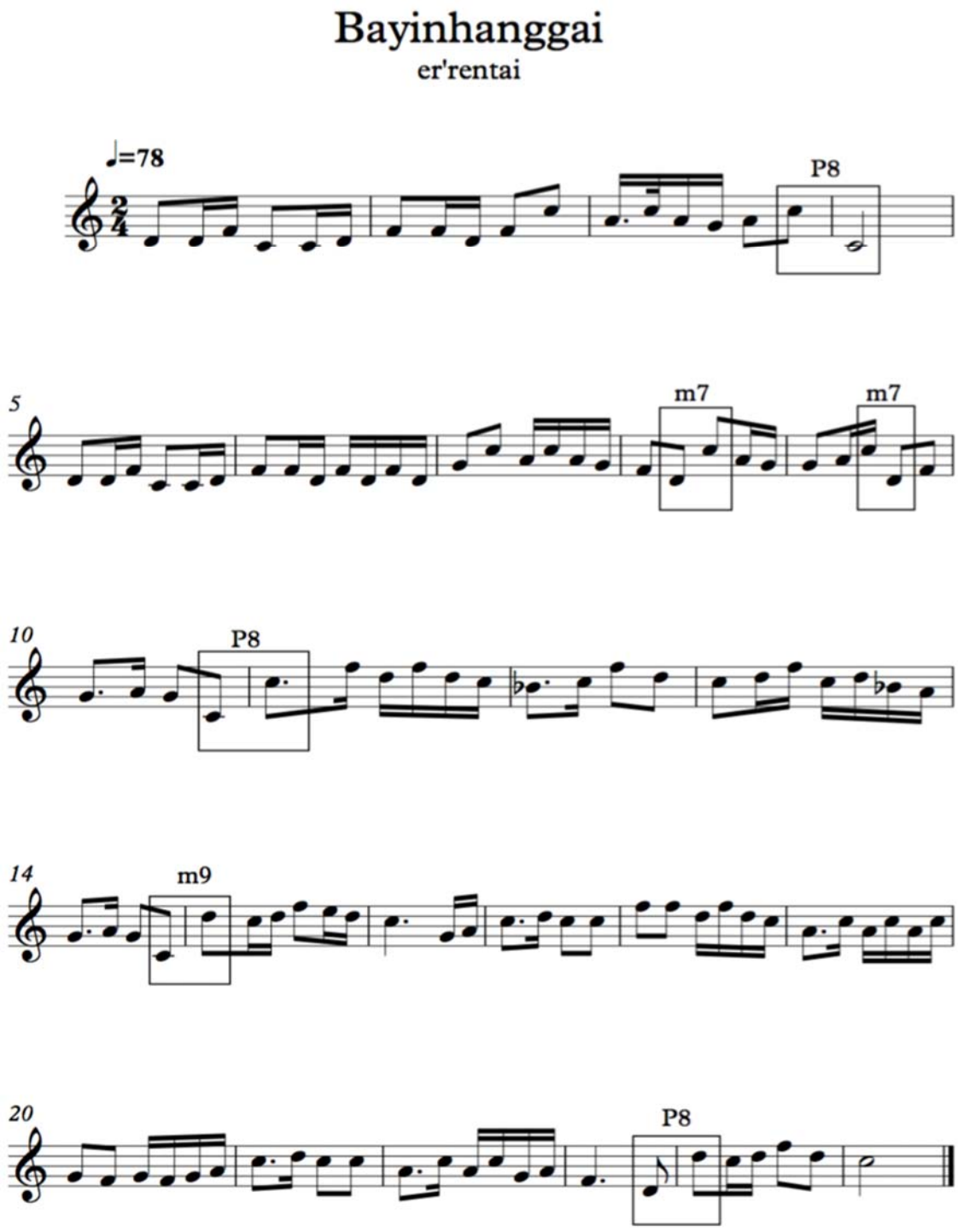

Figure 4.4 The *Er'rentai* Version of *Bayinhanggai* in C "Zhi" Pentatonic Scale[96]

[96] "Bayinhanggai" in *The Compiled History of Er'rentai*, ed. Xing Ye, 391.

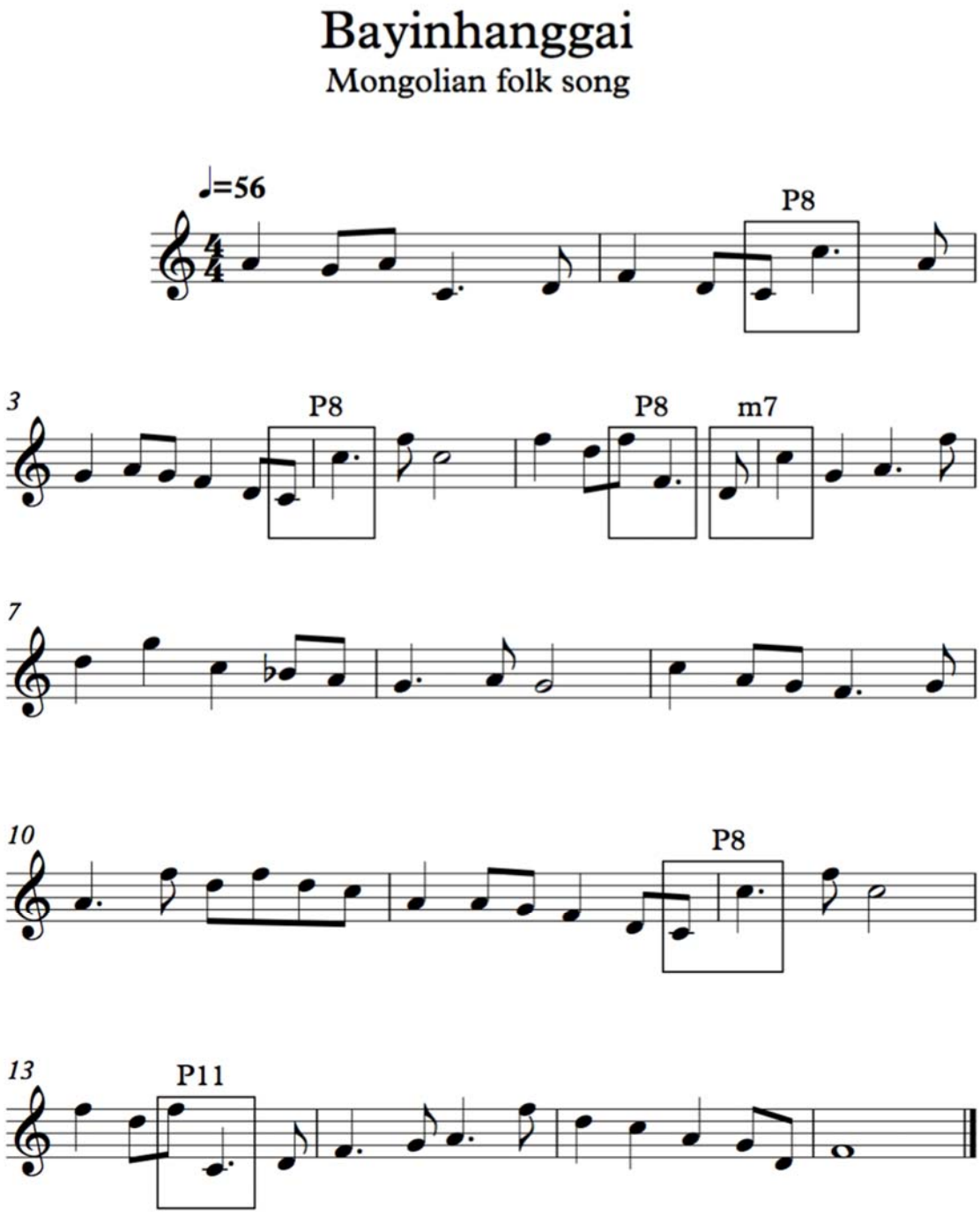

Figure 4.5 The Mongolian Version of *Bayinhanggai* in F "Gong" Pentatonic Scale[97]

[97] Li Baozhu and Mulan and Lv Hongjiu et al., *Folk music in China* (Hohhot: Yuanfang Press, 2002), 75.

Despite the two versions having some similarities in the melodic motions, they are different in meter and scale. The *er'rentai* version is C "Zhi" pentatonic scale (C, D, F, G, A) and in duple meter. This version is comprised of many eighth notes and sixteenth notes. The Mongolian version is in F "Gong" pentatonic scale (F, G, A, C, D) and contains many quarter notes.

Through a comparative analysis of the two versions of *Bayinhanggai*, it can be found that the *er'rentai* musicians not only retained some characteristic musical features of Mongolian version, but also composed and added new melodic fragments based on traditional Mongolian repertoire.

Mongolian Influences on the Form of Western-Style *Er'rentai*

Mongolian vocal music features various musical styles: *long song* is famous for its melismatic ornaments, long melodic lines, wide intervals, and free rhythm. *Short song*s are often sung in strophic form and rhythmically tied to the syllabic style of the spoken dialogue. *Throat singing* creates a vibrant acoustic effect where a constant fundamental pitch is produced simultaneously with one or more overtones.[98]

As demonstrated in Chapter two, western-style *er'rentai* originated from *menguqu*—a folk genre developed from *short song* in the Ordos area of the Tumed Right Banner.[99] While *menguqu* and *short song* share similarities in terms of favoring stepwise motion and a small vocal range, these two styles differ in terms of formal structure: *Short songs* are composed in the strophic form without ornamentation while *menguqu* pieces

[98] Theodore Levin and Valentina Suzukei, *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 62-63.
[99] Jiang Xiaofang, "The *Er'rentai* Version of a *Short Song* Piece 'Senjidema'" *Music Composition* (2012): 3-5.

are in binary form with more ornamentation.[100] In most *er'rentai* music, the melody can be developed in several ways: repeating a melodic phrase or rhythmic pattern, extending the beginning or the ending of a phrase, and having motives that develop throughout the piece. Influenced by *menguqu*, many western-style *er'rentai* pieces are structured as regular sequences of phrases, most commonly two phrases, four phrases, and eight phrases. However, a few pieces contain irregular phrases. There are two methods for developing these irregular phrases: the first method is by variating the primary motive in the last phrase, and the second method is by variating the primary motive throughout the piece. The musical structure of a piece with regular phrases can be analyzed as similar to binary form in the Western music system.

According to Huo Banzhu, binary form[101] is commonly applied to the composition of western-style *er'rentai*. Normally, two lines of verse correspond to one main melody. After finishing singing the first two lines of verse, singers can repeat the new verse with the main melody. In this section, I will analyze the binary form of two pieces, *The Brown Eagle* (a Mongolian *long song* piece, Figure 4.6) and *Alaben Flower* (a western-style *er'rentai* piece, Figure 4.9), and draw some comparisons and generalize about Mongolian influences on *er'rentai*'s musical structure.

[100] Carole Pegg, *Mongolian Music, Dance, and Oral Narrative*, 49.
[101] Huo Banzhu called the binary form as "two-sentence form." This form is commonly applied in the Chinese and Mongolian folk music, especially in the vocal pieces.

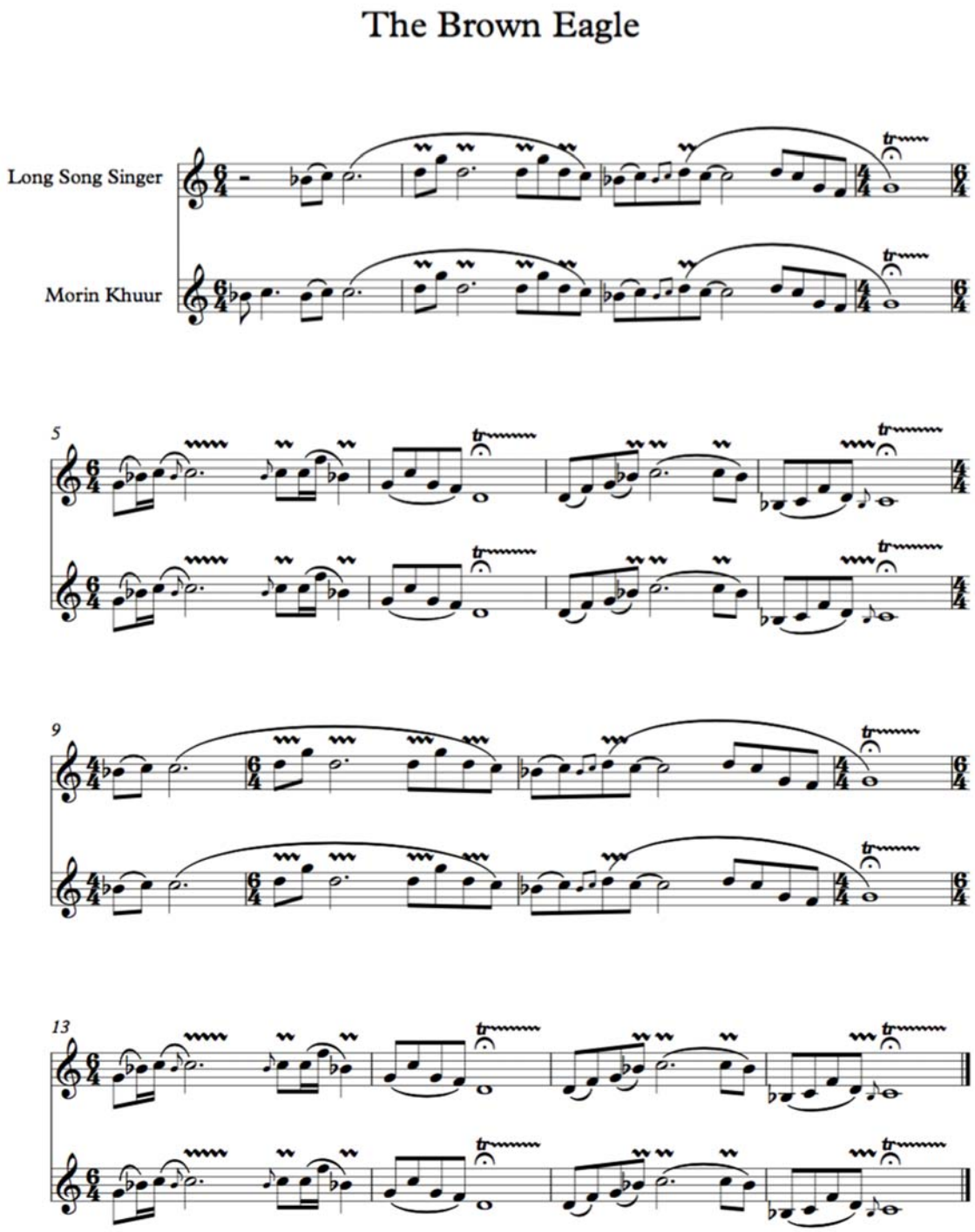

Figure 4.6 *The Brown Eagle* in C "Shang" Pentatonic Scale[102]

[102] Li Baozhu and Mulan and Lv Hongjiu et al., *Folk music in China*, 3.

At first glance, *The Brown Eagle* (C "Shang" Scale: C, D, F, G, B^b) appears simple in structure. Aside from the apparent simplicity, the internal structure can be divided into smaller substructures. The whole piece is in binary form, which includes the A part (mm. 1-8) and the A' part (mm. 9-16). In both parts, each four-measure phrase can be regarded as one substructure. In the A part, the first phrase spans mm. 1-4 (Figure 4.8). The opening sustained on C, then goes up with a perfect fourth to G^5. The second phrase starts with stepwise motion, but drops to the long fermata in mm. 4 (Figure 4.9). The A' part fully repeats the first part.

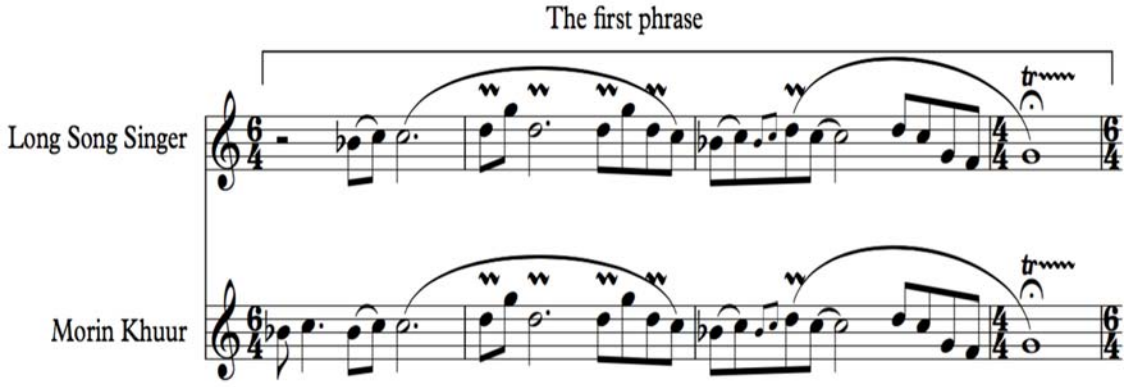

Figure 4.7 The First Phrase of *The Brown Eagle*

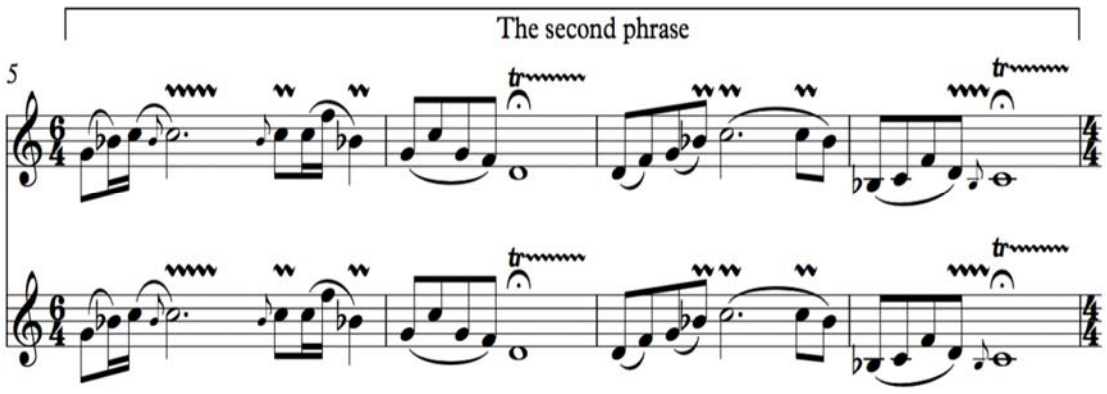

Figure 4.8 The Second Phrase of *The Brown Eagle*

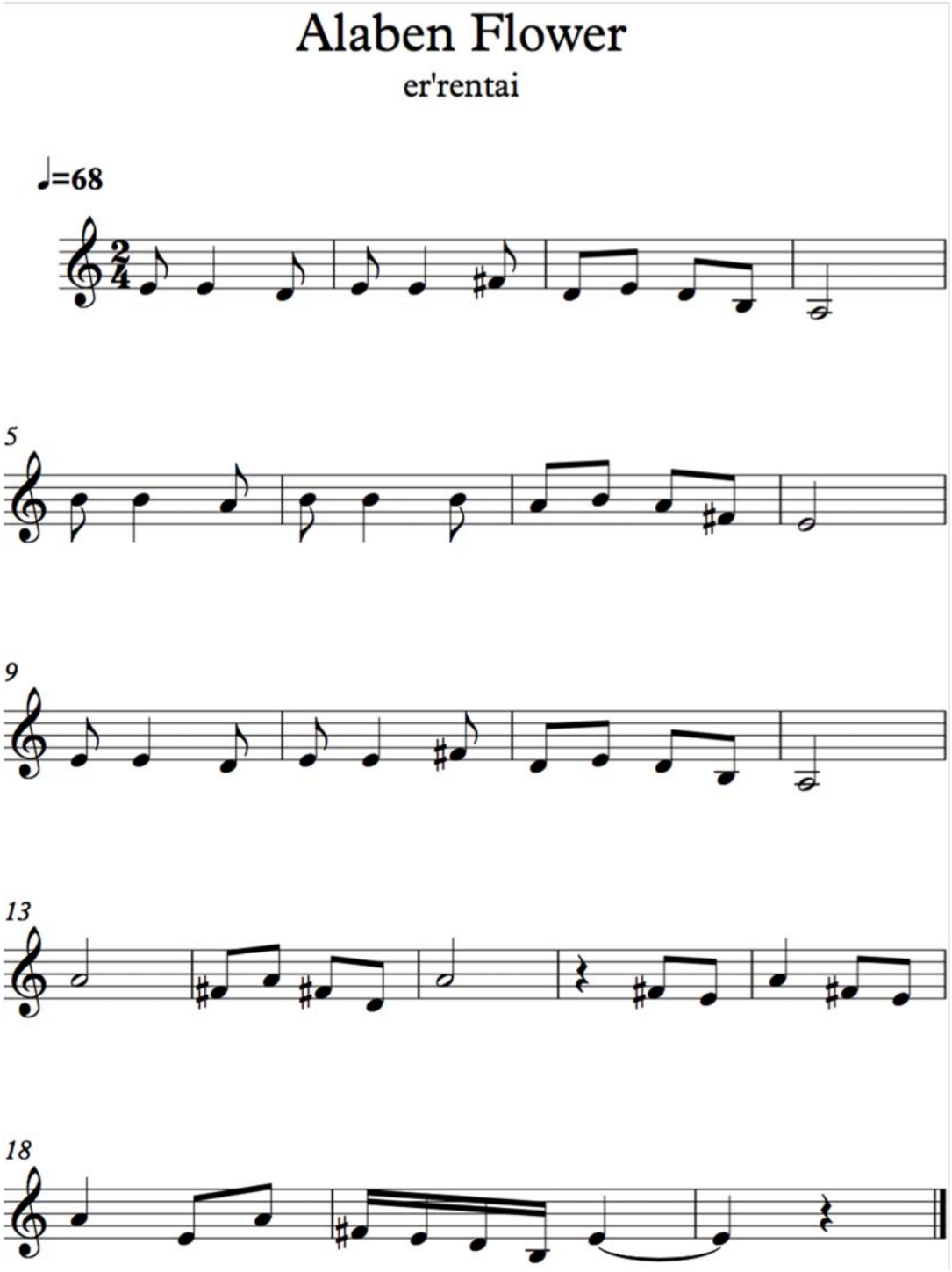

Figure 4.9 *Alaben Flower* in E "Shang" Pentatonic Scale [103]

[103] This transcription of the piece *Alaben Flower* (E "Shang" Scale: E, F#, A, B, D) was Huo Banzhu's version. The music was recorded in August, 2016, and the notation was completed by the author in 2017.

Er'rentai piece *Alaben Flower* is in binary form, and is in the E "Shang" scale (Figure 4.9). In the A part (mm. 1-8), the first phrase starts from mm. 1-4. The melody begins with two measures syncopation, and ends in a half note. The second phrase starts from mm. 5-8, and shares the similar melodic contour with the first phrase, only a P5 higher. There are three phrases in the A' part. The first phrase of the A' part is from mm. 9-12, and entirely repeats the first phrase of the A part. The second phrase is from mm.13-19, its musical material is extended from the second phrase in the A part, with emphasis on the primary tones of the A "Shang" scale.

Mongolian Influences on the Instrumentation of Western-Style *Er'rentai*

Mongolian musical culture also influenced western-style *er'rentai* in the area of instrumentation. Thus, its instrumental accompaniment is very rich in terms of numbers and types of instruments, especially in relation to other Chinese and Mongolian folk genres. More than five instruments have been incorporated into the western-style *er'rentai* ensemble. Among these instruments, the *khuuchir* (a four-string spike tube fiddle) and the *limbe* (Mongolian transverse flute) refer to two major Mongolian instruments that consistently appear in the ensemble. According to different musical settings, such as "wen chang" (the civil setting) and "wu chang" (the martial setting), multiple traditional Chinese instruments have been incorporated into the ensemble, including the *pipa* (a four-stringed string instrument in a pear shape), the *ruan* (a four-stringed instrument in a rounded shape), and the *zheng* (Chinese zither). In terms of eastern-style *er'rentai*, its instrumental accompanying ensemble consisted of Chinese string instruments and wind instruments, such as *yangqin*, *pipa*, *zheng*, *zheng*, and drum sets.

The *Khuuchir* (a four-string Mongolian fiddle) and *limbe* (Mongolian transverse flute) are traditional Mongolian instruments that are used to accompany singing. Carole Pegg has written about the instruments of the Eastern Mongolia and the Western Mongolia. For Eastern Mongol groups, they use two- or four- string spike tube fiddles, such as the *morin huur* or the *khuuchir*, with a *limbe* (six finger-holes flute). For Western Mongolian groups, they play a *shudraga* (three-string lute), a *ikil* (two-string spike box fiddle) with a *tsuur* (three-finger hole flute) and *yoochin* (Mongolian dulcimer).[104]

Based on this, the western-style *er'rentai* has borrowed instruments from the Eastern Mongolian groups, such as the *khuuchir* (a four-string spike tube fiddle) and the *limbe* (Mongolian transverse flute). Through long-term communication between the Chinese and the Mongols, *er'rentai* musicians acquired a feel for Mongolian instruments and gradually incorporated them into their practice and performances.

Khuuchir

The *khuuchir*, as an Eastern Mongolian four-string spike tube fiddle, is composed of four pegs, four strings, a sound-box, and a curved bow with horse hair (Figure 4.10). The sound comes from a small, square sound-box, which is made of bamboo, wood, or copper. Its neck is inserted into the instrument's body. Moreover, its four strings are fastened below to the sound-box. The first and the third string are tuned in unison, while the second and the fourth string are tuned in the upper fifth.[105]

[104] Carole Pegg, *Mongolian Music, Dance, and Oral Narrative*, 67.
[105] Ernst Emsheimer, *The Music of the Mongols* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 83.

Er'rentai musicians usually call the *khuuchir* a *sihu*, which means "four-string fiddle." In general, the *khuuchir* or *sihu* is usually tuned to play pieces in the "Gong" scale and "Zhi" scale. As a traditional Mongolian instrument, *khuuchir* or *sihu* is suited to various playing styles and performing techniques. Slide, trill, tremolo, and vibrato can be commonly used in the performance. Since the *khuuchir*/*sihu* has a broad range as well as a piercing timbre, it wins favor of *er'rentai* musicians. Moreover, it is often incorporated with other Mongolian or Chinese instruments.

Indeed, the *khuuchir*/*sihu* is not only taken as an accompanimental instrument in performing vocal music, but also played as a solo instrument in some western-style *er'rentai* repertoire, such as *jinzhurima*, and *Bayinhanggai*, etc. Many famous *er'rentai* musicians are professional *Khuuchir* players. According to Huo Banzhu, *khuuchir* music was a major entertainment for the general public in the late Qing dynasty (1880-1900).

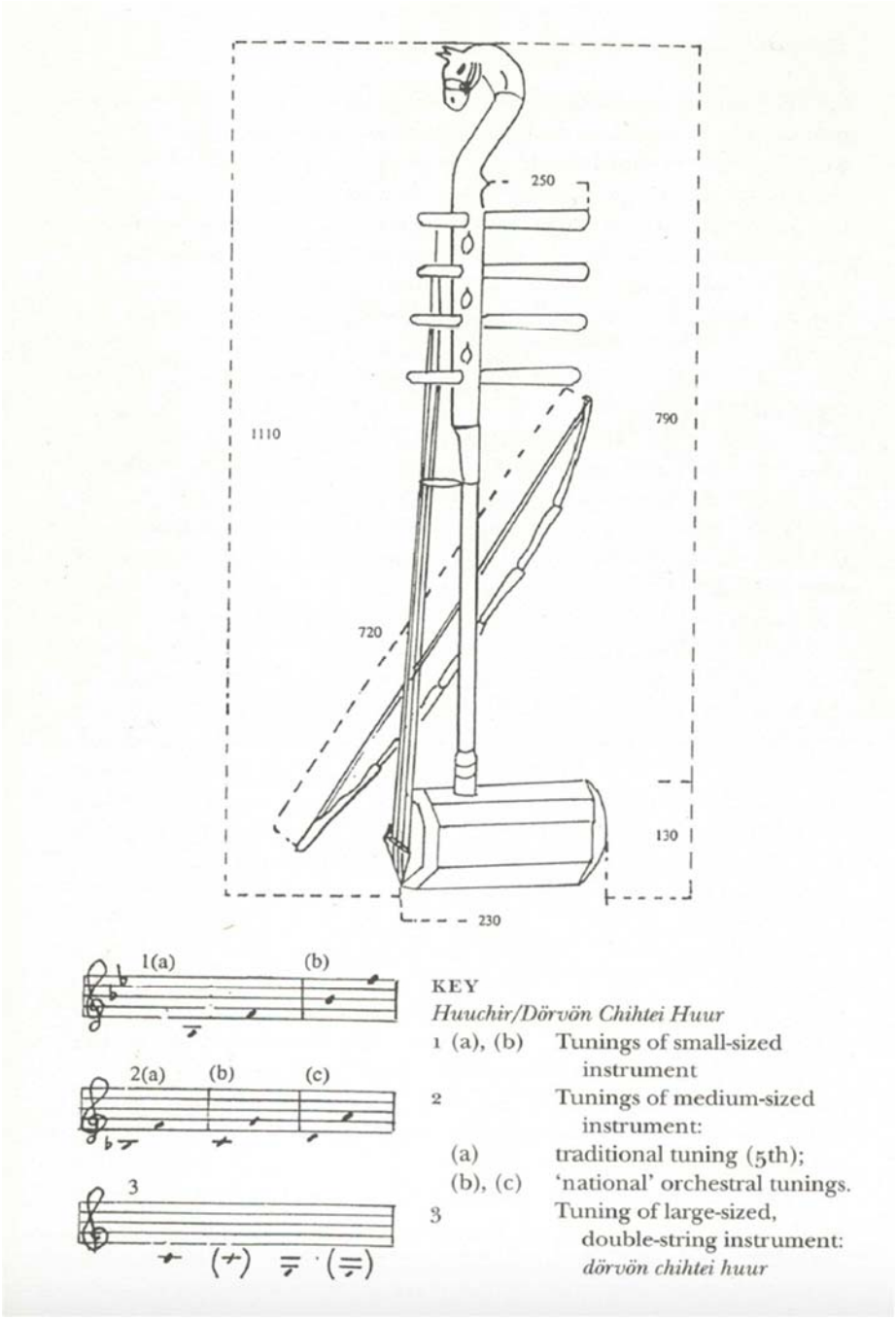

Figure 4.10 *Khuuchir*[106]

[106] Carole Pegg, *Mongolian Music, Dance, and Oral Narrative*, 77.

Limbe

Limbe (a Mongolian transverse flute), the primary instrument of western-style *er'rentai* (Figure 4.11). In the past, it was made either from bamboo or brass. Now, plastic is the standard material of a *limbe*'s construction. The sound of *limbe* can be described as "passing air through the valley,"[107] which reflects the natural sound that nomadic culture tend to favor. As with the *Khuuchir*, *limbe* can be played both as a solo instrument and as accompaniment.

The traditional *limbe* features six holes. The distance between each adjacent hole varies a little. As a solo instrument, the *limbe* can produce most intervals, including the major and minor second, major and minor third, fourth, fifth, and octave. Its range is from B^{b3} to G^{5} (Figure 4.12).

Similar to the Chinese transverse flute, trill, tremolo, and vibrato are usually applied to perform *limbe*. However, through a particular technique, *limbe* musicians may produce two pitches simutaneously. This technique is called the "dual-voice playing" technique, and it is derived from the *chuur*-an aerophone instrument with a double reed structure.

[107] Huo Banzhu described the sound of *limbe* as "air flowing."

Figure 4.11 The Range of *Limbe*[108]

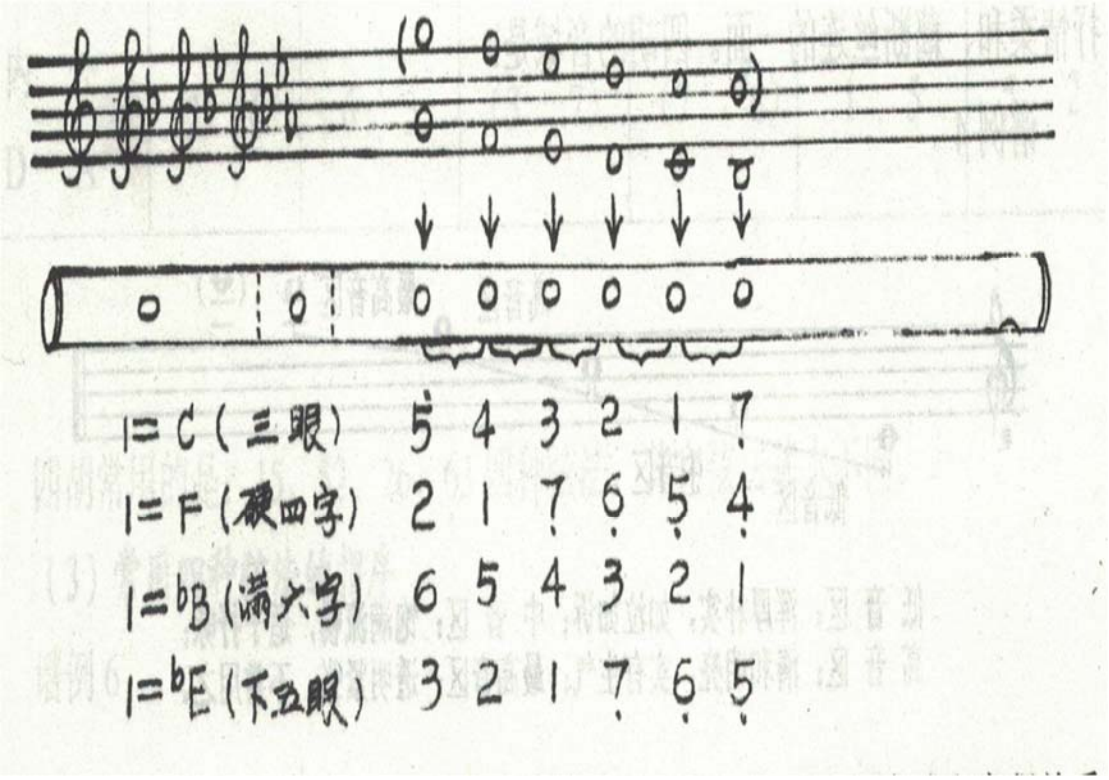

Figure 4.12 The Tuning of *Limbe*[109]

[108] "*Limbe*" in *The Compiled History of Er'rentai*, ed. Xing Ye, 467.
[109] Ibid., 468.

Mongolian Influences on the Scales of the Western-Style *Er'rentai*

A musical scale refers to a set of notes sequenced in an ascending or descending order. Chinese music in general, consist of five notes and repeat per octave, known as the pentatonic scales. Stephen Jones defines the features of pentatonic scales in the *New Grove Music Online*. As illustrated by him, the melodies of Chinese traditional instrumental music "are based on anhemitonic pentatonic scales, with the fourth and seventh degrees used as passing notes or as part of a temporary new pentatonic scale a 5th above or below the main tonic."[110]

The pentatonic scales have long been associated with Chinese instrumental music. In the meanwhile, they have also been widely applied to multiple Chinese folk genres, including traditional Chinese folk music and minority music traditions. In the Chinese system, the five pitches of the pentatonic scales are given the syllables "Gong," "Shang," "Jue," "Zhi," and "Yu," which is equivalent to do, re, mi, sol, and la in the Western solfège system (Figure 4.13). Additionally, every pitch in this system can be set as the tonic of a pentatonic scale and subsequently developed into different scales with different intervallic sequences of pitches.

Among all the five pentatonic scales, the "Gong" scale, the "Shang" scale, and the "Zhi" scale are commonly used in compositions. The tonic of the "Gong" scale is equivalent to "do" in the Western solfege system. Being the central scale in the pentatonic system, the "Gong" scale shares the same intervallic relationships as the major pentatonic

[110] Stephen Jones, "Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Traditions," *Grove Music Online*. Accessed March 1, 2017. http://www.grovemusic.com.

scale.[111] To construct the "Gong" scale, one needs to locate the tonic and determine the intervallic relationships between each adjacent note. For example, the C Gong scale proceeds with C, D, E, G, and A. There are three M2 and two m3 in this scale. The rest pentatonic scales also can be constructed according to their specific intervallic relationships.

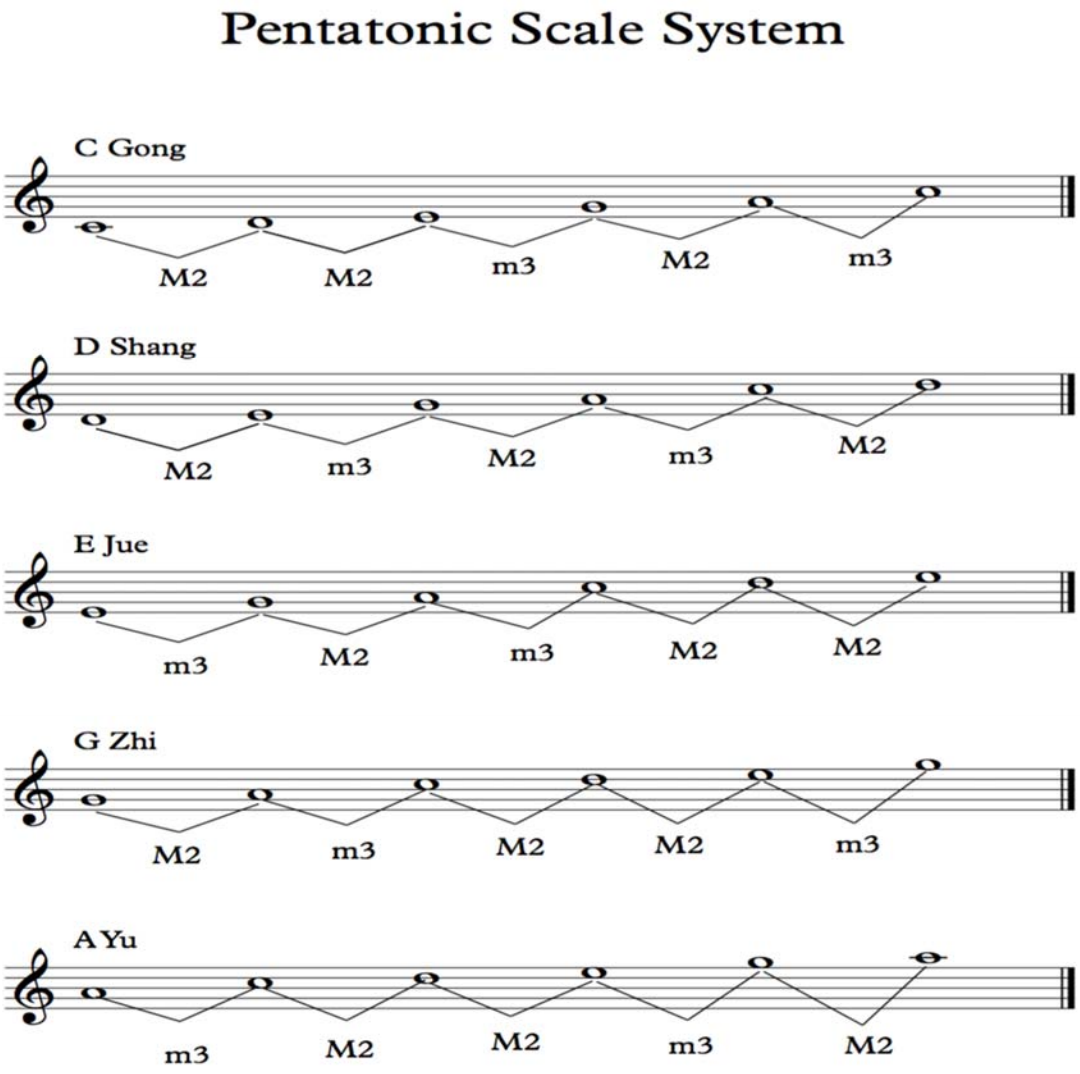

Figure 4.13 The Pentatonic Scale System

[111] It is commonly agreed that Chinese pentatonic system was closely associated with ancient Chinese astronomy theories. Each pentatonic note was named after one star of the 28 Lunar Mansions. The first note "Gong" means "Center", is placed at the center of the Lunar Mansions.

There are many scholarly writings concerning the use of the pentatonic scales in Mongolian folk music. According to Haobisi, an Inner Mongolian musician, "Mongolian ancestors had established their own musical system on the basis of the pentatonic scales. The 'Gong' scale and the 'Zhi' scale were two primary scales that have been used in the composition of Mongolian heroic epic poems."[112] Also, Zhao Binshan addressed the Mongolian pentatonic system in his master thesis. "A Mongolian song usually starts with one of three basic scales— the 'Gong' scale, the 'Shang' scale, and the 'Zhi' scale."[113] As mentioned by him, each note in the pentatonic scale can be used as the tonal center to develop a new scale. This is a common method of making smooth modulations.

According to Huo Banzhu, the prototype of western-style *er'rentai* was *menguqu* (a Mongolian folk music genre), which was created by the Mongolian people in the first half of the twentieth century. Although western-style *er'rentai* has experienced a long period of cultural integration, this genre retains most characteristics of the Mongolian musical traditions, such the application of Mongolian instrumentation and lyrics in vocal music. Through oral transmission, the knowledge of Mongolian music theory, such as the application of specific pentatonic scales and syncopations, has been preserved and passed down by *er'rentai* musicians.[114]

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[112] Haobisi, "The study of Mongolian Music in the Ancient Time," *Chinese Music* 3 (2006): 62-63.
[113] Zhao Binshan, "Singing on the Grassland" (M.M. thesis, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2016).
[114] During the interview, Huo Banzhu mentioned that the "Zhi" scale has been applied in the western-style *er'rentai*. In addition, he briefly performed some pieces to demonstrate the Mongolian influences on *er'rentai*'s formation.

Influenced by Mongolian folk music, there are three pentatonic scales that are used in western-style *er'rentai*. During this study, I found several pieces of western-style *er'rentai* that utilize the C "Gong," D "Shang," and the G "Zhi" scales that are prominent in Mongolian music. Among them, *Palou* (Climbing the Mountains), *Qingshou* (A Celebration), and others were written in the "Gong" scale. In addition, *Guahongdeng* (Hanging the Red Lanterns), *Alabenhua* (Alaben Flower), and several other pieces were composed in the "Shang" scale. Moreover, *Duilinghua* (Papercut), *Huashanmian* (Drawing the Folding Fan), and many other pieces were composed in the "Zhi" scale. In this section, I will analyze three pieces of repertoire, and identify the similarities between *er'rentai* and Mongolian music in the use of the "Gong," "Shang," and "Zhi" pentatonic scales.

In the piece *Qingshou* (A Celebration), five primary notes comprise the pentatonic scale: F, G, A, C, and D (Figure 4.14). Pitch B is non-chord tone and should not be considered as the scale notes. In addition, the pitch C ends the whole piece and appears several times as last note of the smaller sentences. Furthermore, the intervallic relations between the five primary notes in the pentatonic scales is the same as that of the major pentatonic scales. Thus, this piece is the "Gong" pentatonic scale transposed to F.

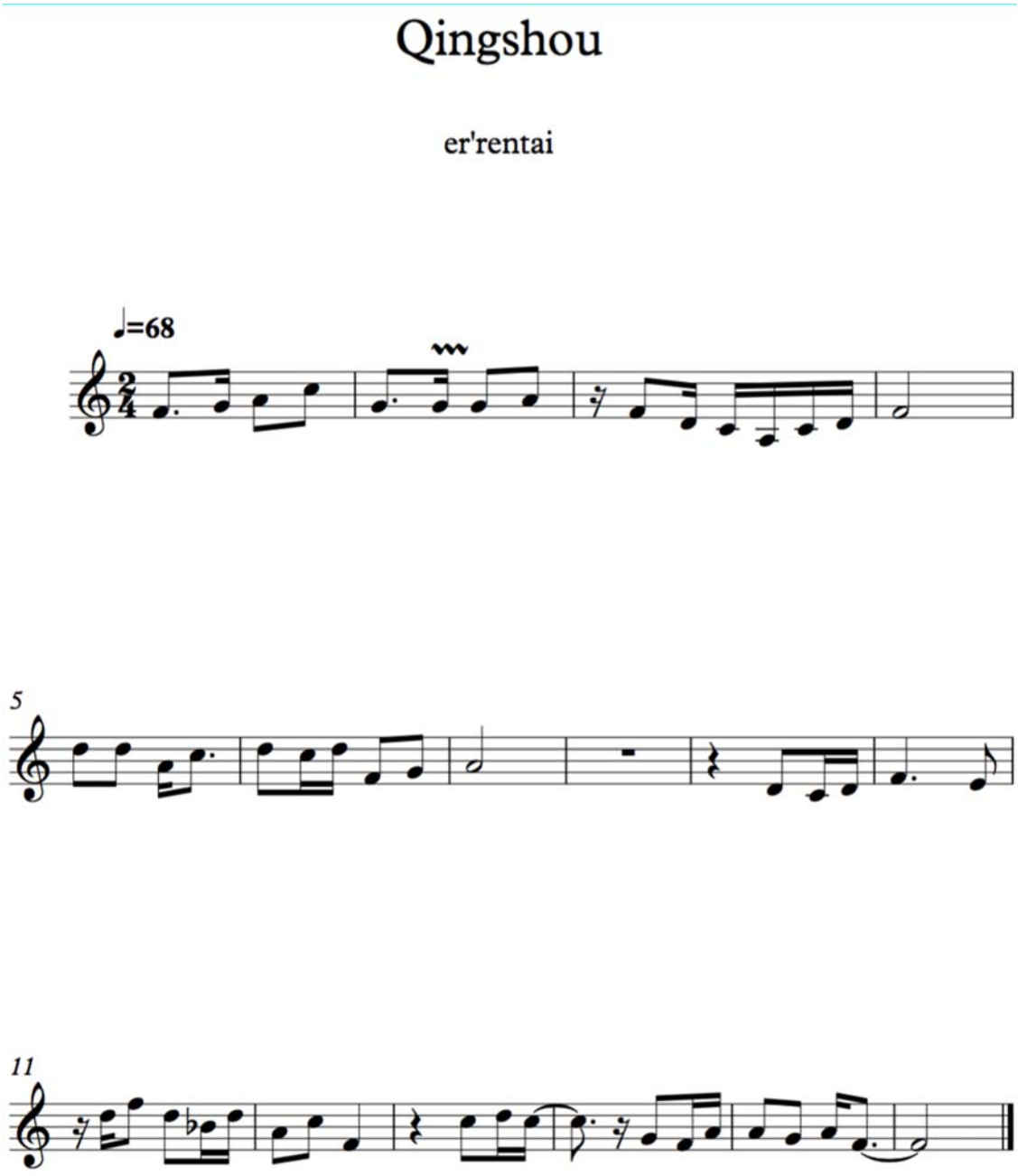


Figure 4.14 *Qingshou* in F "Gong" Pentatonic Scale[115]

[115] This transcription of the piece *Qingshou* was Huo Banzhu's version. The music was recorded in August, 2016, and the notation was completed by the author in 2017.

In the piece *Shiduihua*, five pitches consist of the pentatonic scale: C, D, F, G and B^b comprise the C "Shang" pentatonic scale (Figure 4.15). In the piece *Duilinghua*, G, A, C, D, and E comprise the G "Zhi" pentatonic scale (Figure 4.16). These two pieces differ from their tonics. Among all the pitches in *Shiduihua*, C is the tonic and functions as the downbeat in many measures. In contrast, the tonic of *Duilinghua* is G because of its position as the beginning and ending note in the whole piece. *Shiduihua* is considered as the C "Shang" scale, and *Duilinghua* is recognized as the G "Zhi" scale.

"Gong," "Shang," and "Zhi" scales are commonly utilized in the western-style *er'rentai* pieces. Since 1960s, the Cultural Affair Department collected and transcribed hundreds of western-style *er'rentai* pieces. A majority of these pieces are transcribed in the "Gong," "Shang," and "Zhi" scales. The transcriptions of Huo's singing also support this assumption. The repertoire that I transcribed and cited all fall into these three scale categories. Although there might have been few western-style *er'rentai* pieces that were composed in "Yu" or "Jue" scales, we may assume that major repertoire was written or improvised in "Gong," "Shang," and "Zhi" scales.

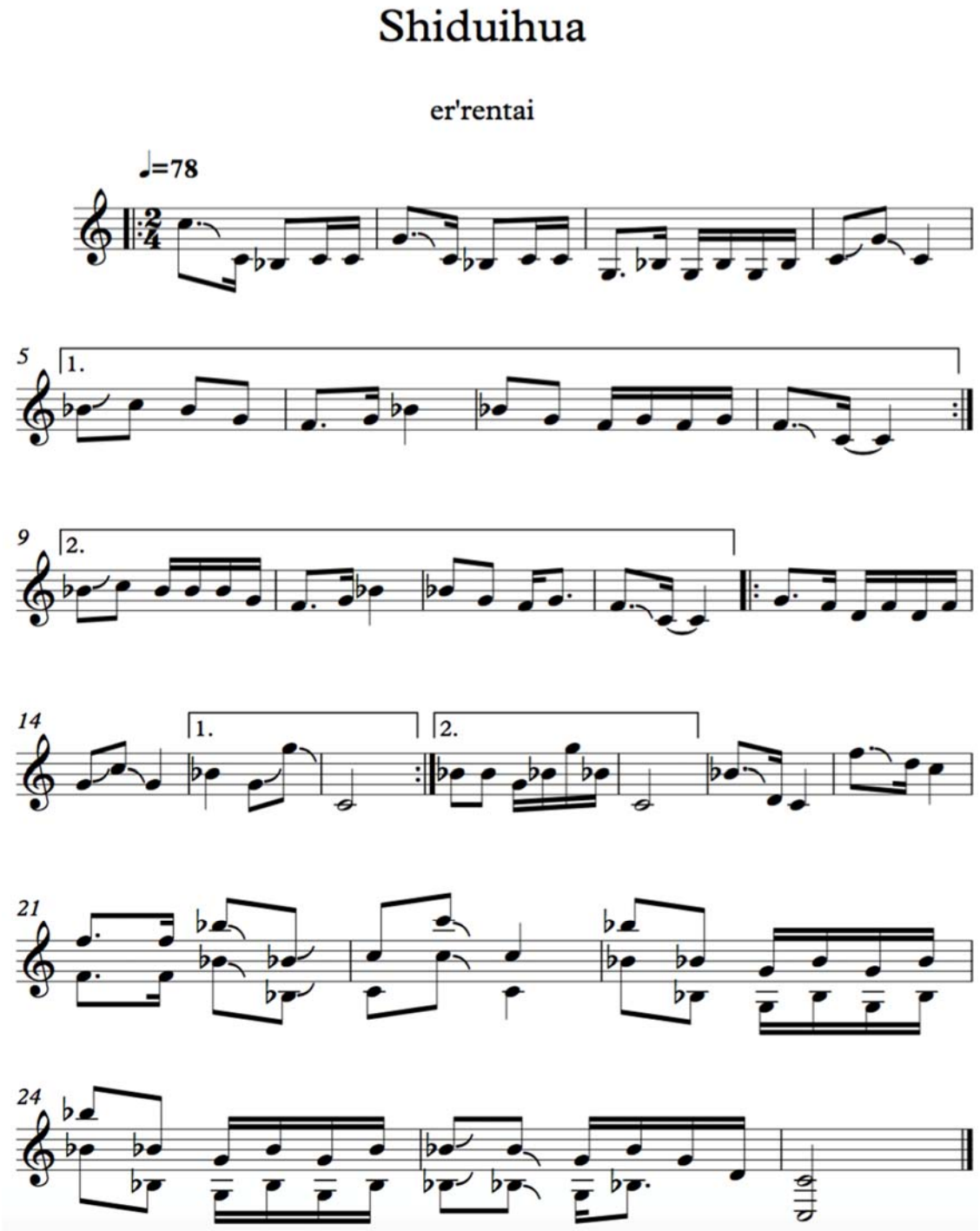


Figure 4.15 *Shiduihua* in C "Shang" Pentatonic Scale[116]

[116] This transcription of the piece *Shiduihua* was Huo Banzhu's version. The music was recorded in August, 2016, and the notation was completed by the author in 2017.

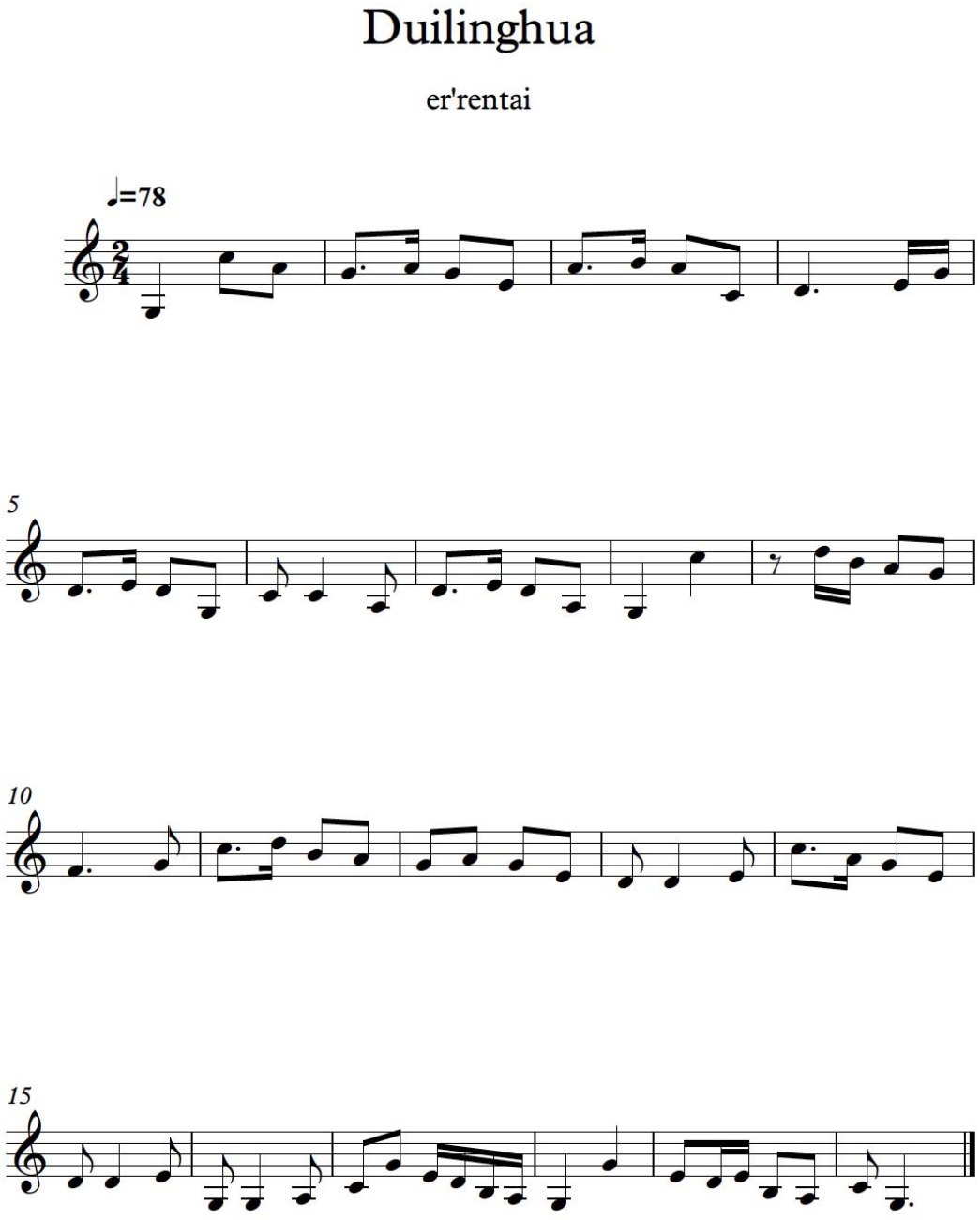


Figure 4.16 *Duilinghua* in G "Zhi" Pentatonic Scale[117]

[117] "Duilinghua" in *The Compiled History of Er'rentai*, ed. Xing Ye, 154.

Mongolian Influences on the Lyrical Style of the Western-Style *Er'rentai*

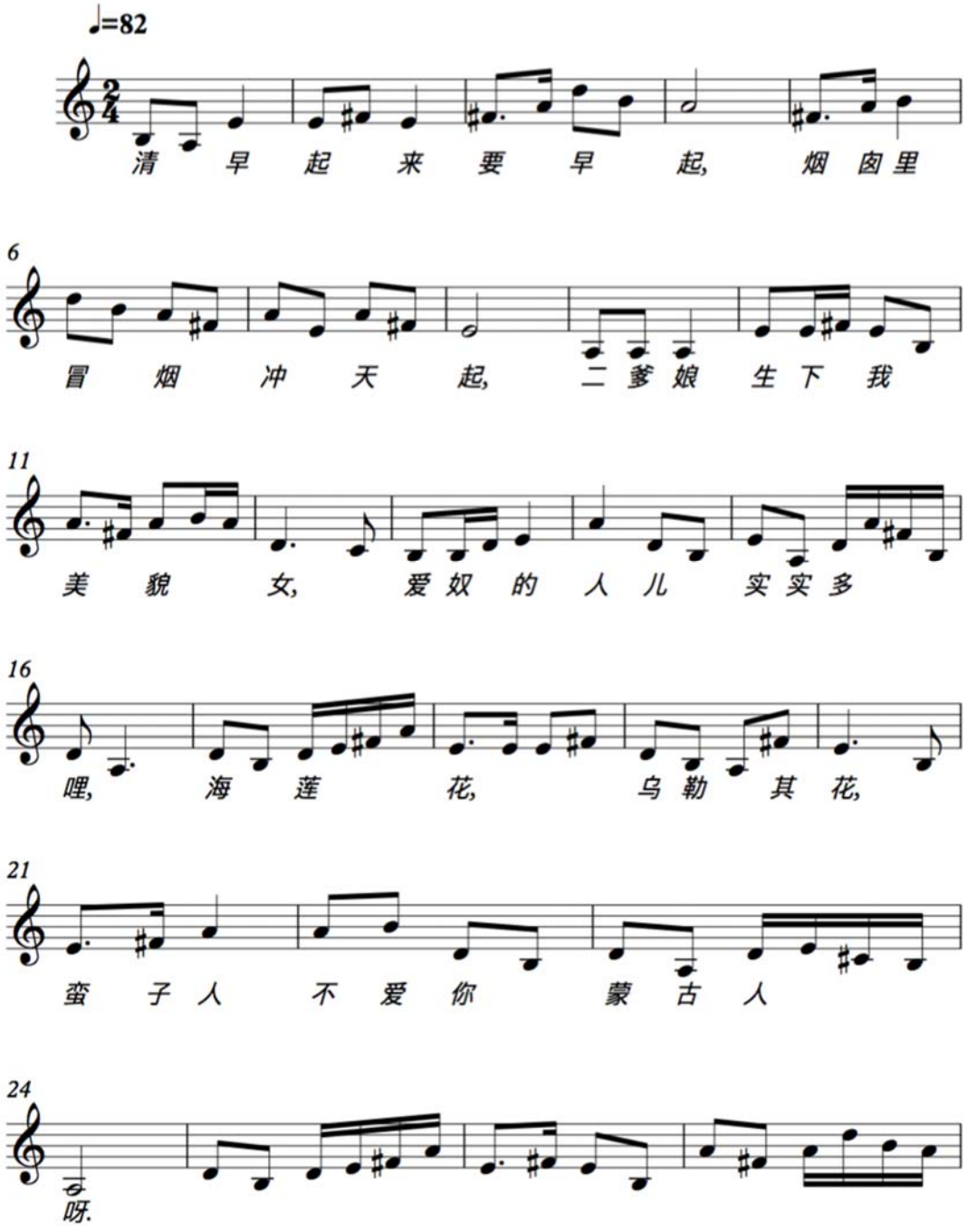
The western-style *er'rentai* is said to be closely associated with the development of a cross-cultural lyrical style called "Fengjiaoxue." "Fengjiaoxue" is a lyrical style that incorporates both Mongolian and Chinese languages, specifically in western-style *er'rentai*. "Fengjiaoxue" was derived from *zuoqiang* in terms of its bilingual titles and lyrics. As suggested by Huo Banzhu, "Fengjiaoxue" was created by Laoshuangyang, a Mongolian musician, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Since Laoshuangyang was a bilingual speaker, he could perform in both Mongolian and Chinese. To appeal audiences from both ethnic groups, he usually sang a piece twice in two languages, singing Mongolian lyrics the first time, and then retelling the lyrics in Chinese the second time. By doing so, Laoshuangyang developed a strong reputation among the *er'rentai* musicians and audiences. With increasing experiences in performing in the "Fengjiaoxue" style, Laoshuangyang began to develop the "Fengjiaoxue" style in performing existing Mongolian folk songs, such as *Alaben Flower* and *Senjidema*.[118]

Hailianhuang is a western-style *er'rentai* piece that use both Mongolian and Chinese languages in its lyrics (Figure 4.17). The song describes a love story of a Mongolian couple: a Chinese girl named Hailianhua meets a Mongolian man named Wuyinqi. They fall in love with each other at the first sight (Figure 4.18). In this song, the lyrics of the male character (mm. 33-51) are written in Mongolian, and the lyrics of the female character (mm. 1-24) are written in Chinese. There are two arias in this piece. The first part starts from mm. 1-24 (A "Zhi" Scale: A, B, D, E, $F^{\#}$), while the second part starts from mm. 33-51 (E "Shang" Scale: E, $F^{\#}$, A, B, D).

[118] Huo Banzhu, interviewed by Shao Luyin, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, July 2016.

Hailian Flower-Alaben Flower

er'rentai



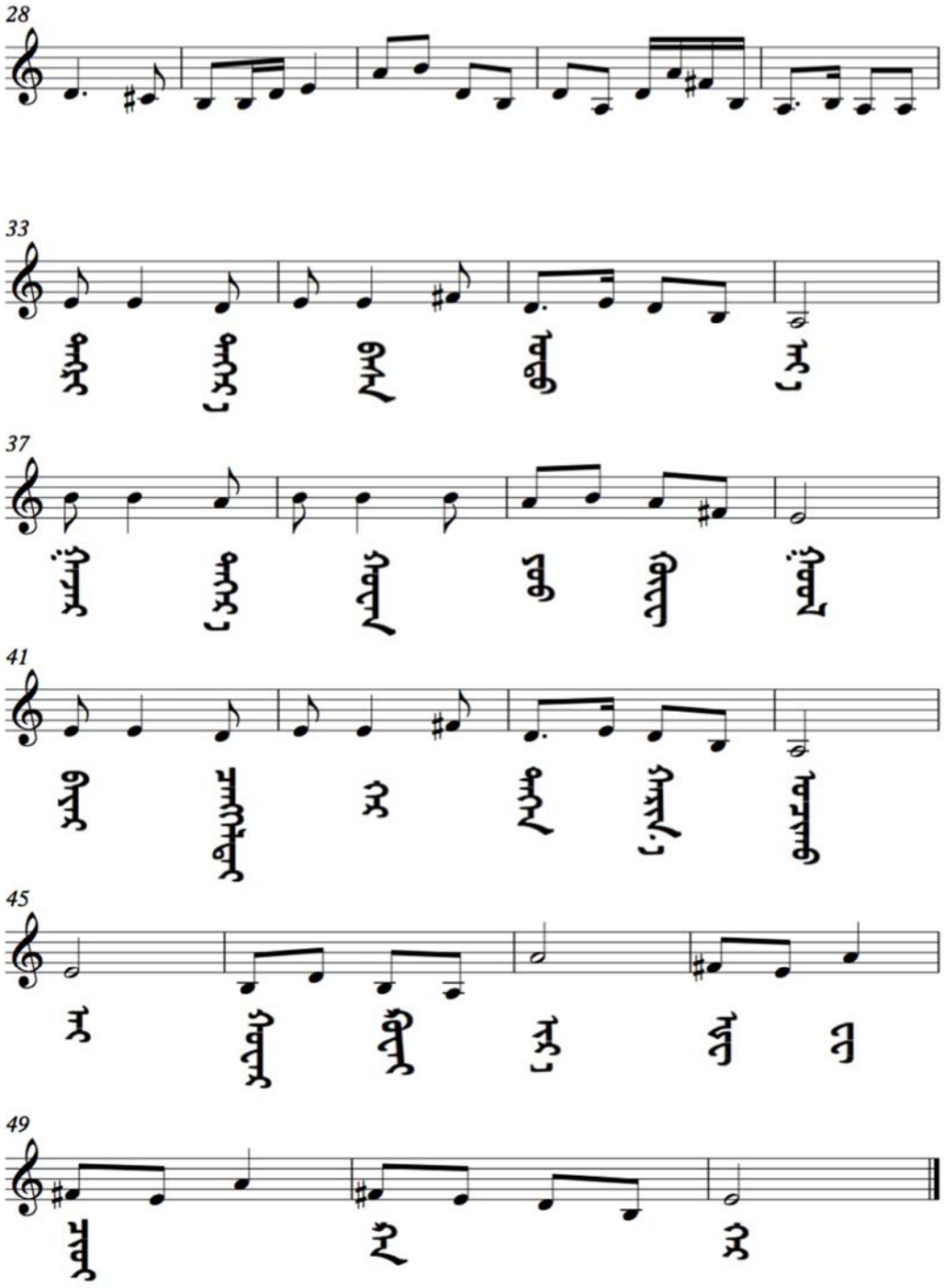


Figure 4.17 *Hailianhua Flower-Alaben Flower*[119]

[119] The score and the Chinese lyrics (measure 1-24) of *Hailianhua* is a transcript of Huo Bnazhu's version.

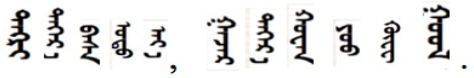
Hailanhua (female character):

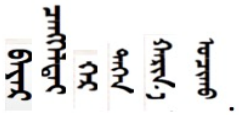
清晨起来，我家烟囱冒出了炊烟.
In the morning, wisps of smoke rising from the kitch chimney of my village.

我父母将我生得美貌，追求我的人很多.
I am a beautiful girl and I have many suitors.

海莲花，乌勒其花!
Hailianhua, the flower of the Tumed Banner!

Wuyinqi (male character):


Starts in the heaven, rivers on the earth.


I am happy to return my lovely home.

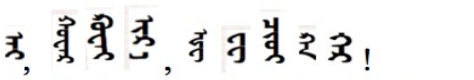

Hailanhua, my lovely girl. Come with me to start our family!

Figure 4.18 A Translation of *Hailian Flower-Alaben Flower*

Another example of "Fengjiaoxue" is demonstrated in the traditional *er'rentai* repertoire *Guahongdeng*. (Figure 4.19) *Guahongdeng* (C "Shang" Scale: C, D, F, G, B^b) portrays a picture of a girl who misses her lover on the Autumn Festival (Figure 4.20). In this song, several Mongolian spellings are kept the same in the Chinese lyrics. For example, the Chinese word, 崩巴(bengba) is pronounced as "bengba" () in

Mongolian, meaning “my heart.”[120] Since most *er’rentai* musicians are trained bilingually in singing, they would not have difficulty singing or understanding the lyrics. When they perform pieces that feature the “Fengjiaoxue” style of lyrical presentation, they may add some translations to some words for the audiences.

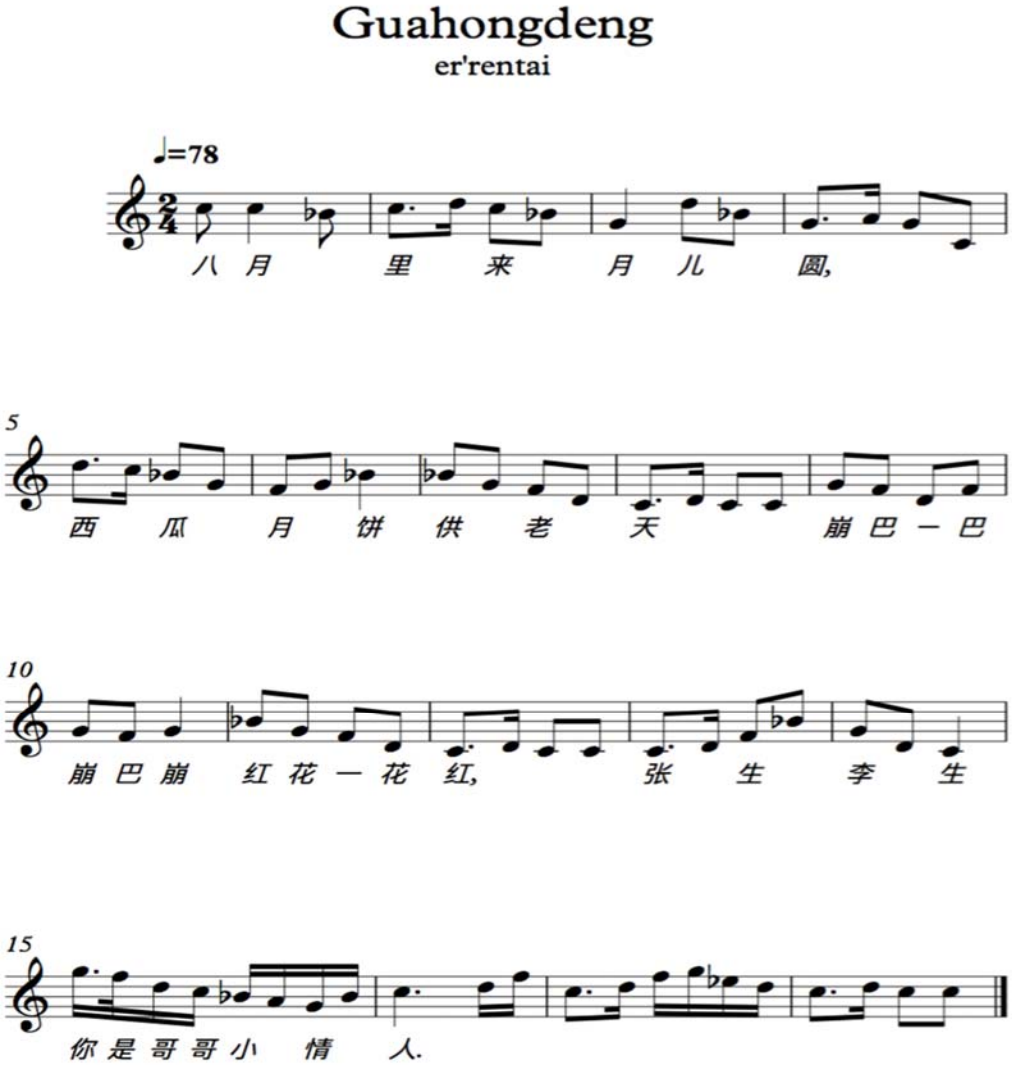


Figure 4.19 *Guahongdeng* in C “Shang” Pentatonic Scale[121]

[120] The Mongolian lyrics are translated in traditional Mongolian alphabet system. This system is widely used in Inner Mongolia region, China.
[121] “Guahongdeng” in *The Compiled History of Er’rentai*, ed. Xing Ye, 177.

八月里来月儿圆，西瓜月饼供老天

A full moon is in the sky; offerings are prepared for the God.

崩巴巴崩，红花花红

My lover is in my heart; my lover is in my heart.

张生，李生，你是哥哥小情人

Mr. Zhang, you are my forever lover.

Figure 4.20 A Translation of *Guahongdeng*

"Fengjiaoxue" was first created by Laoshuangyang and then developed by many *er'rentai* musicians in the twentieth century. Due to its bilingual nature, "Fengjiaoxue" has been accepted and favored by both ethnic groups (Chinese and Mongolian) in the Tumed Banners. By performing *er'rentai* in the "Fengjiaoxue" style, people from different ethnicities were able to become closer to each other by sharing aspects of culture, costumes, and even religious beliefs. During this acculturation process, many new pieces of western-style *er'rentai* have developed clear musical and lyrical characteristics from Mongolian musical traditions.

CONCLUSION

Born on the Inner Mongolian Plateau, *er'rentai* was a prominent folk genre that was created and developed based on social interaction and communication between Mongolian and Han Chinese residents in the Inner Mongolia region. Through the experience of sharing folk songs, instruments, and narrative stories at these events, the two ethnic groups established a closer relationship with each other.

Since the beginning of twentieth century, the early performance style of *er'rentai* in everyday life gradually gave way to more formal performances that incorporated more elaborate corporation of staging, stylized movements, instrumentation, and larger numbers of performers. At first, this transformation of the performance style took place in the urban areas. Changes in *er'rentai* were bound to happen given that China went through several social changes in the early twentieth century. After the fall of the Qing dynasty, the appearance of enlightenment movements resulted in a changing socio-political environment in the urban areas. Among them, the Xinhai Revolution[122] and the May Fourth Movement[123] were two significant milestones that overthrew China's last feudal dynasty and ushered in a new political philosophy of "nationalism, democracy, and the people's welfare."[124] Guided by principles of democracy and nationalism, modernized schools and Western education system were officially introduced to several

[122] The Xinhai Revolution was a revolution that overturned the Qing dynasty and established the Republic of China in the mainland China and Taiwan. Sun Zhongshan was one important leader who convened revolutionaries and groups to establish a democratic society in China.
[123] The May Fourth Movement was a cultural, political movements initiated by student participants on May 4, 1919, protesting the government's toleration of allowing Japan and Germany to cede territory in Shandong Province. This patriotic movement sparked nationalism among intellectual elites, students, and politicians.
[124] This political doctrine was developed by Sun Zhongshan in his Three Principles of the People in 1905. This philosophy was taken as a guideline for the modernization development of the Republic of China.

major east coast cities, such as Shanghai and Beijing. These new-style schools played a dominating role in disseminating Western culture and democratic ideology to the upper classes. Under the influence of the Western educational trends, music classes were incorporated in the major curriculum of primary and middle schools. Music teachers then created a new genre of "school songs" (*xuetang yuege*) for use in these new-style schools. These songs usually featured two common features: a westernized melody (often quoted from Western church hymns) and Chinese lyrics. At the same time, the emphasis on music education also promoted the development of Chinese folk music, including Beijing opera and Qunqu. Folk musicians were invited to perform in the new-style schools or city halls with the aim to introduce traditional repertoire and distinctive performance styles to young students, exerting profound social influence in the large cities and towns.

While many folk music genres were introduced and accepted by urban audiences in the early twentieth century, *er'rentai* remained in the rural areas of Inner Mongolia region and was performed at informal occasions. This was primarily due to Inner Mongolia's remote geographic location and relatively unstable political environment. As a genre that flourished in the western rural areas of Hohhot, *er'rentai* was more insulated from the modernizing trends of the east coast urban areas. Although Hohhot was known as the provincial capital of the Inner Mongolia region, the city did not become modernized until the 1940s. Moreover, Inner Mongolia's unstable political environment was another factor in *er'rentai*'s development in the early twentieth century. During World War I, the whole Inner Mongolia region was controlled by local Mongolian aristocratic families. Mongolian culture was the mainstream culture dominating almost every aspect of life, including language, customs, literature, music and art. However, with

the Japanese occupation in World War II and the interference of the Chinese warlords, the political environment became more complex and disruptive. Even though there is a long history of foreign forces becoming involved in Inner Mongolia's political affairs, residents tried to remain self-reliant and culturally independent. In terms of *er'rentai*, traditional performances were still a part of local entertainment life, gradually becoming a common fixture of village and family events. During the offseason after farming, people from both ethnic groups would perform *er'rentai* pieces at home or on the local stage(s). This performance tradition has lasted until the present.[125]

The next vital period in the development of *er'rentai* refers to the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-76). With the victory of the Chinese Communist party in the War of Liberation, the People's Republic of China was established in 1949. Over the course of the next several decades, the party and government then launched several political movements such as the Great Leap Forward[126] and the Anti-Rightist Movement.[127] In terms of cultural development, the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles was a non-governmental organization with nationwide cultural associations that was highly influential.[128] These associations were involved in the discovery and preservation of Chinese folk music, including spoken drama and folk opera. However, their work was stopped and replaced by the Cultural Revolution Group, whose intention was to designate and create model art works, later known as *yangbanxi*. One of the most

[125] According to Huo Banzhu, spontaneous private performances are held regularly in many villages at Tumed Banners.
[126] The Great Leap Forward was a social and economic movement from 1958 to 1962. China's Chairman Mao Zedong was the leader. He wanted to transform the country from agrarian society to socialist society by mass industrialization and collectivization.
[127] Anti-Rightist Movement was a campaign against the "rightist," who believe in capitalism and criticized the collectivism brought by Chairman Mao Zedong.
[128] China Federation of Literary and Art Circles was established in 1949. Most of its members were writers, artists, and musicians, who stayed active in academic studies and competitions.

effective ways to achieve "model status" was to incorporate Western and Chinese elements to create a new-style work. As a folk opera genre, *er'rentai* inevitably encountered obstacles during the Cultural Revolution. On the one hand, *er'rentai* was criticized for its use of folk subject matter. It is well known that all art works should conform to the principles of modern forms, values and subject matter during the Cultural Revolution. The subjects in most *er'rentai* works are drawn from folklore, legend, and everyday life, which were denigrated as old and feudal in accordance with the principles of the Cultural Revolution Group. In addition, more than half of the *er'rentai* repertoire was also associated with love scenes or stories, which were considered unacceptable during the Cultural Revolution. Some repertoire was even categorized as "yellow songs" ("licentious" songs), and were forbidden to be practiced and spread. Although most *er'rentai* musicians were rejected for their "incorrect" political stance, a few of them did receive a fair treatment during their careers. For example, Liu Yinwei was a representative figure during the Cultural Revolution. Under his influence, many lesser-known Chinese and Mongolian amateur musicians became more devoted to the development of *er'rentai* music in Inner Mongolia region.

Finally, *er'rentai* musicians had more opportunities to perform on city stages after the Chinese Economic Reform in 1978. Before that, they practiced and performed *er'rentai* pieces mainly in the fields or indoors at the table. With the new urban development made possible through the more open economic policies of this time, local musicians began to move to the nearby cities to seek job opportunities. By changing the "habitat" of *er'rentai*, earlier performance styles gradually became more elaborate, stylized and formal. This huge transformation was indirectly spurred by Deng Xiaoping's

social and economic reforms initiated in 1979. Deng was a pragmatic person, who advocated that "practice is the sole criterion for judging truth." [129] Different from Mao's radical political policies in the Cultural Revolution, Deng agreed with the idea of learning from the West. Starting in the 1970s, Deng relaxed the social and economic limitations, unleashing entrepreneurship and giving ordinary people more opportunities to improve their quality of life. In addition, publishing houses, journals and public entertainment centers were also reopened and made available to the public.

As the capital city of Inner Mongolia region, Hohhot benefited a lot from the continuing economic reforms issued in the late 1980s. The government gave local farmers and herdsmen rights to sell their crops, and encouraged them to start village-level enterprises. From the 1980s, the government opened foreign investment and commercial activities in most parts of city. Many *er'rentai* musicians settled down in the city and brought local music and culture to the urban audiences. Among them, Huo Banzhu was a representative migrant, who worked as a professional *er'rentai* musician in Hohhot city.

With an emphasis on college education, Deng further opened the universities and technical colleges to improve educational conditions nationwide. The Inner Mongolia Arts School was established as a higher education institution, which was famous for cultivating professional musicians and artists, especially in the areas of Mongolian folk music and fine arts. Teachers, researchers and students in the folk music department spent years collecting, preserving, rearranging, and recomposing traditional *er'rentai* repertoire to increase the accessibility of this genre with the public. Moreover, Huo and his colleagues introduced traditional repertoire to urban audiences. They not only

[129] Hu Fuming, "Practice is the Sole Criterion for Testing Truth," Guangming Daily, May 11, 1978, 1.

preserved important elements of *er'rentai*, but further developed its performance style by incorporating elements of modern staging, dramatic plots, and stylized acting in contemporary performances. To enhance the music, *er'rentai* researchers formed and extended the standard instrumental accompanying ensemble, which incorporated Mongolian string and wind instruments, Chinese plucked string instruments, and percussion instruments. In terms of the singing, they combined national music singing techniques with authentic *er'rentai* vocal styles to create a more dramatic and sentimental singing style. Due to their efforts, *er'rentai* developed into a more formal style, and became a local feature in the Inner Mongolia region.

Initiated in the twenty first century, the Chinese government raised the state subsidy for individual artists and provided financial assistance and training for folk artists and musicians. Huo and his colleagues gained a lot of benefits from this policy. Many of them participated in recordings of television and radio programs, introducing *er'rentai* to more people. In addition, a few *er'rentai* musicians including Huo established private folk music schools, providing professional training for students seeking potential jobs in *er'rentai* performance.

Through my fieldwork trips and study of the primary sources, I gained a deep understanding of the formation and transmission of western-style *er'rentai*. I also gained knowledge of *er'rentai*'s status in contemporary society. Despite my efforts conducting fieldwork and research on *er'rentai*, there are still many areas that could be improved in the study of western-style *er'rentai*. First, I found that my position as an "outsider" (as a young academic woman of Han Chinese descent) sometimes limited my access to people and resources during my fieldwork trips. Since Huo Banzhu was the only interviewee in

my fieldwork, I was heavily reliant on his help and guidance most of the time. Although I have a good relationship with Huo, I still faced some difficulty in scheduling interviews, acquiring primary sources, and participating in his *er'rentai* classes. Furthermore, a comprehensive study of western-style *er'rentai* would also need to include additional fieldwork in the rural areas of Tumed Right Banner. However, this was hard to realize for several reasons: the short time line of this master's thesis study, difficulty in learning the rural regional dialect, and the lack of time to build a social network in the rural areas. Although most villagers and local musicians could speak Mandarin, their dialect is difficult to understand for a native Han Chinese speaker. Even if I could understand their dialect, I was routinely rebuffed or rejected by potential interviewees for unknown reasons.

With this in mind, this thesis is a first step in my study of *er'rentai*. In the future, I wish to conduct a more detailed study on *er'rentai's* oral transmission in the rural areas. Through extensive fieldwork on *er'rentai*, I hope to continue this work to convey a more comprehensive and clear picture of *er'rentai* as it is practiced today.

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